DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 431 472 JC 990 396

AUTHOR	Gainous, Fred
TITLE	Op-ed Essays: Sharing the Perspective of Alabama's Two-Year Colleges, Volume I-III.
INSTITUTION	Alabama State Dept. of Postsecondary Education, Montgomery.
PUB DATE	1999-06-11
NOTE	67p.
PUB TYPE	Collected Works - General (020) -- Opinion Papers (120)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC03 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Articulation (Education); *College Role; *Community Colleges; Dual Enrollment; *Education Work Relationship; Governance; *Institutional Mission; Job Enrichment; *Labor Force Development; Partnerships In Education; Two Year Colleges; Work Experience Programs
IDENTIFIERS	*Alabama

ABSTRACT

This document consists of three separately-published collections of essays by the chancellor of the Alabama College System, presenting his perspectives on aspects of the two-year college system in that state. The document begins with the system's mission statement, and an explanation of the principles underlying the mission. The essays that follow address these topics: (1) the findings from a national workforce development study showing the critical role of community colleges; (2) the importance and relative cost effectiveness of remedial education; (3) Alabama's two-year colleges and market-based learning as developed with the input of local employers; (4) the experiences of the community colleges in implementing Alabama's school-to-work initiative; (5) a description of the debate taking place regarding which state agency should govern the community colleges; (6) the work being done by the Articulation and General Studies Committee to develop statewide course standards for freshmen and sophomores; (7) dual enrollment programs being established between high schools and community colleges; (8) the impact of the global economy on community college offerings; (9) the rise of employment among women in high-wage, high-skill, professional and administrative jobs; and (10) the impact of the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 on community college training. (CAK)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document.. *
****

ED 431 472

OP-ED ESSAYS:
SHARING THE PERSPECTIVE OF ALABAMA'S TWO-YEAR COLLEGES

Volume 1, May 7, 1999
Volume 2, June 11, 1999
Volume 3, July 9, 1999

FRED GAINOUS, CHANCELLOR
THE ALABAMA COLLEGE SYSTEM

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☐ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

ROBERT ROMINE

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

1

May 7, 1999

Vol. I

JC 990 396

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

CONTENTS

Page

Foreword 1

Access to Postsecondary Education in Alabama 3

Alabama's Two-Year Colleges and the New Economy 5

Alabama's Two-Year Colleges Face the 21st Century 7

Leadership Provided by the Alabama State Board of Education 9

The People's Colleges 11

Alabama's Two-Year Colleges and the Semester System 12

The Cost of Alabama's Two-Year Colleges 14

Education and Earning Power 15

Special Contributions of Alabama's Two-Year Colleges 16

Why Do We Have Two-Year Colleges? 18

Promoting Economic Growth Through Workforce Development 20

FOREWORD

THE ALABAMA COLLEGE SYSTEM

MISSION STATEMENT

The Alabama College System, consisting of public two-year community, junior, and technical colleges and an upper division college, seeks to provide accessible quality educational opportunities, promote economic growth, and enhance the quality of life for the people of Alabama.

Alabama's public two-year colleges were established 30 years ago to accomplish the mission outlined above. Because they are a special component of higher education with a special mission, they offer an important perspective for consideration by the public and by policy makers. This unique perspective is built on the following principles:

- Public policy decisions to provide universal access to educational opportunities beyond high school have created the two-year college. Central to the mission of the two-year college is the principle that people of all ages, of all races, of all stations in life, and in all geographic regions should have access. Success in providing access to the two-year college is judged by the degree to which persons from all socio-economic, cultural, and racial and ethnic backgrounds; students of all ages and gender; and students disabled by various physical or learning disabilities enroll in and succeed in college level programs. Inherent in access is a commitment to an "open door" policy which provides meaningful access to all constituents in the service area who can benefit from college programs and services. A special commitment of the two-year college is to attract and serve students who are traditionally under-represented in higher education.

- The Alabama College System is committed to providing barrier-free access to quality instructional programs and activities within a reasonable commuting distance of each student. Population trends, socio-economic status, ethnicity, age, gender, and prior learning conditions have significant implications for the future of postsecondary education in the State of Alabama. Factors such as these impact the quality and effectiveness of The Alabama College System in accomplishing its mission. Such demographic factors affect how well an institution of postsecondary education serves its students and the residents of its service area.

- Alabama's two-year colleges have reached out actively into their constituent communities to assess the need for vocational/occupational training. They have become sensitive to the fact that those individuals most in need of training for employment, workforce training, and education for career advancement are often the same individuals who are unfamiliar with a campus environment, and are least likely to seek needed services. The Alabama College System is positioned to serve as the catalyst for workforce development in the state. It has a complete array of training delivery systems which can be used to serve the citizens of Alabama.

- As a public resource, each institution of The Alabama College System should have sufficient support from state and local sources so that each may accomplish its role, scope, and mission without adverse impact on institutional operations, services, or students.

- System structure should be determined by the colleges' abilities to be flexible and to respond aggressively to the diverse needs of both students and employers. The colleges should be at the center of regional economic development efforts. System structure should be based on access, delivering more instruction to more people. Educational delivery systems should produce cost efficiencies, provide enhanced instructional and student services, provide improved programs and services to businesses and industries, and contribute to the economic and cultural health of the communities in which the colleges are located.

- The citizens of Alabama are entitled to access to programs that enhance the quality of life, prepare them to be producers of goods and services, and assist them to be lifelong learners. Services include: occupational/technical education, academic transfer education, literacy education, continuing education, student support services, workforce development, and cultural and civic awareness.

- The overriding consideration and dominant factor for decision-making in The Alabama College System institutions must be quality. It affects and permeates each facet of the institutions. Neither resource allocation nor policy development should impact negatively The Alabama College System and its ability to deliver services.

- The Alabama College System is committed to a seamless transition for the secondary student entering from high school, for the college student moving between and among colleges and universities, and for the adult who comes from business and industry or life.

AN OP-ED ESSAY
DR. FRED GAINOUS, CHANCELLOR
ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION

ACCESS TO POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION IN ALABAMA

Education isn't just one of the important things in life. In many respects it is the most important. Education determines not only individual income and quality of life, but community wealth and the quality of community life. The new jobs which come to Alabama will require more education. In our global economy those who achieve only a high school education will be worse off than those who dropped out of high school a generation ago. Only 25% of the population will secure a university degree. The other 75% of our population must have some level of education beyond high school. That is why the issue of access to postsecondary education is so important. Those who do not have access are doomed not just to a woefully inadequate education, but to marginality and a struggle merely to survive.

Access has social, economic, cultural and developmental dimensions. It is the ability or right of students to enter postsecondary institutions. It is the ability of students to secure the necessary economic resources, and the right of students to avail themselves of fundamental assistance, such as financial aid, in order to be able to enter such institutions. It is the physical convenience of such institutions in terms of proximity to where students reside, and in terms of the structural features of facilities. But access is much more.

Access includes what students actually do once they are "in the building." It is the state or quality of support and success mechanisms which permit students effectively to use and benefit from postsecondary institutions. Access includes an atmosphere and environment designed to encourage and assist students in developing their talents to optimum effectiveness. These elements of access have always been the cornerstone of the "open door" admissions policy of Alabama's two-year colleges. The 75% of the population which does not secure a university degree must have access to postsecondary education through the "open door" to a secure and economically healthy future.

Two-year colleges have improved access for students by enhancing student support services. Not only do these efforts include improved testing, placement, counseling and advising, improved retention mechanisms to prevent drop-outs and stop-outs, but also more effective remedial/developmental efforts and improved cooperation with high schools. Remedial/developmental programs provide students with college level skills which they will need to attain the competencies necessary to succeed in their chosen occupations. Many of the students who take advantage of such programs are adults seeking job related skills training to change jobs, to keep the jobs they are in, or to advance to new opportunities in their workplace. Dual enrollment, tech-prep, cooperative occupational/technical programs, and apprenticeship programs all provide high school students with improved access to postsecondary education. In view of the fact that postsecondary education has become a requirement for effective participation in the workforce, such efforts will need to be continued and strengthened.

Two-year college critics often cite the large numbers of part-time students who take only a few courses, or the relatively low number of students completing a degree within two years as negative attributes of two-year colleges and of access. Almost universally such critics have never attended or utilized the services of a two-year college. They often have in mind a student model based on the traditional, full-time, parent or scholarship supported liberal arts university student of thirty years ago. Such a mind set overlooks several salient issues. The average age of two-year college students nationally, and in Alabama, is 29. Two-thirds of two-year college students are part-time, compared to only 40% of four-year college and university students. Nearly half of all two-year college students work full-time, and over 60% of two-year college students over 23 years of age work full-time. Many have family responsibilities. Many follow job opportunities in the increasingly mobile labor force that is today's reality. Large numbers of part-time students who take only a few courses are not an indictment of two-year colleges or of access. This simply reflects real life for the 75% of the population not pursuing a university degree. Similarly, low numbers of students completing degrees is no indictment of two-year colleges or of access. Two-year colleges and their students do not function in a credential-driven labor market, but in a competency-driven labor market. Business realized long ago that degrees do not indicate ability. Two-year colleges have been well aware of this, and have become extensively involved in competency-based education. Two-year college students often enroll without aspiring to a degree. They take a few classes to help them find work or perform better in jobs they already have. They may attend at the behest of their employers who pay only for a prescribed number of courses.

In the future, all of our citizens will need some level of education beyond high school to be productive members of Alabama's workforce. Eighty percent of the new jobs available in the next decade will require a minimum of two-years of postsecondary education, and 75% of those working today will still be in the workforce in the next decade. Continued and improved access to postsecondary education isn't just one of the important issues facing us. In many respects it is the most important issue. In keeping with the critical importance of access the Alabama State Board of Education has established the following mission for Alabama's two-year colleges: The Alabama College System, consisting of public two-year community, junior, and technical colleges and an upper division college, seeks to provide accessible quality educational opportunities, promote economic growth, and enhance the quality of life for the people of Alabama.

AN OP-ED ESSAY
DR. FRED GAINOUS, CHANCELLOR
ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION

ALABAMA'S TWO-YEAR COLLEGES AND THE NEW ECONOMY

As the result of the changing economy facing Alabama's citizens, the impact of global competition, and adjustments to labor market needs, Alabamians find themselves competing for fewer and fewer but increasingly high tech jobs. Adult students are turning to two-year colleges in greater numbers seeking assistance in further developing workplace skills, and in securing technical education which was unnecessary or unavailable when they took low tech jobs soon after high school. In a workplace becoming increasingly automated and technical, students who graduated from high school seven to ten years ago are unlikely to have adequate computer skills to remain successful in today's competitive job market. This trend will intensify over time. Students and employers have increased their demands on two-year colleges to design courses that will teach the precise skills that workers need. They will continue to increase their demands for colleges to develop partnerships with local businesses and industries, to design credit and non-credit courses for workers who need instruction ranging from quick refreshers to long-term theory-based education. This education will increasingly include not only technical and computer skills, but also foreign language skills, workplace literacy skills, and remedial developmental courses designed for adults and aimed at improving basic reading and writing skills.

To measure the success of two-year colleges only by counting the number of associate degrees awarded is to ignore completely the broader, more important mission which society and the economy have imposed upon our two-year colleges. Many two-year college students do not intend to achieve a degree or certificate, but attend classes in order to secure work, or in order to perform better in jobs which they already have, or in order to develop work related skills which they lack. In the future, the success of two-year colleges will be measured by student goal attainment and satisfaction, job placement rates, and employer satisfaction, not by numbers of students completing degrees.

To be sure, two-year college students will continue to seek degrees, and degree-seeking students, particularly in the traditional liberal arts and transfer areas, will continue to be an important segment of the two-year college population. Today, less than half of two-year college students indicate an intent to pursue a liberal arts transfer degree. It is projected that over the next decade, students will still seek, and our colleges will still award, liberal arts transfer degrees. But the ratio will increasingly shift to the occupational sector. Currently, the great majority of all of the awards made by Alabama's two-year colleges are in the occupational area. This is in stark contrast to two-year colleges thirty years ago, when only a tiny fraction of the students were involved in occupational programs. In even greater contrast, a growing number of two-year college students will be students who have already secured a bachelor's degree, and who are returning as participants in occupational programs and specialized training. A growing number of students will be students who transfer from four-year colleges and universities. This is a reflection of the fact that two-year colleges in Alabama

and across the nation serve a highly mobile labor force, and that they offer the life-long learning opportunities so vital to a productive life in the new economy.

To prepare today's working adult students for the new economy, two-year colleges have developed flexible, non-traditional schedules. It is not uncommon in Alabama to see the parking lots of two-year colleges crowded at night and on the weekend. Educational opportunities must be made available at times which do not interfere with the demands of the workplace. Similarly, it is not uncommon to find two-year colleges offering training in the workplace itself. Such work-based education offers optimum convenience for employees and employers, and permits training to be customized to the special needs of particular businesses and industries. These kinds of adaptations will be necessary to prepare our citizens for the new economy.

Labor market needs will continue to expand the critical importance of the role of the two-year colleges in Alabama and in the nation. Eighty percent of the new jobs which become available within the next decade will be jobs in information technologies, which have rapidly become an expanding specialty of two-year colleges. Eighty percent of the new jobs available in the next decade will require a minimum of two-years of postsecondary education. Seventy-five percent of the people working today will still be in the workforce in the next decade, and they will need continuous training and retraining. Two-year college graduates today earn 24 percent more in the workplace than their coworkers with just a high school diploma. Our society, nationally and locally, cannot thrive in the new economy unless we make postsecondary education and training accessible to the broadest possible range of citizens.

AN OP-ED ESSAY
DR. FRED GAINOUS, CHANCELLOR
ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION

ALABAMA'S TWO-YEAR COLLEGES FACE THE 21ST CENTURY

As the world prepares to welcome a new century, two-year colleges in Alabama and across the nation face what is the most exciting time of their history. Rarely in the long and successful saga of the development of two-year colleges have the opportunities been more abundant, or the challenges more significant. The impact of technology on society has had incalculable effects on two-year colleges and the students they serve. This is brought sharply into focus by reflecting on the fact that there is more computer power in the PCs sitting on the desks in the dens in the homes of many of our students than there was on the first satellite to the moon. Technology is changing the way two-year colleges educate their students in Alabama and elsewhere. And the students themselves are transforming the two-year college mission and structure as we prepare to enter the next century.

Two-year colleges in Alabama on the dawn of the 21st century are much different than they were at their inception. This change can almost be characterized as a revolution, one which is continuing, and which will undoubtedly mean that two-year colleges in the years to come will be much different than they are today. Today's two-year colleges in Alabama are centers of diversity, change and experimentation. Two-year colleges in Alabama have become more than ever a significant element in local and state economic development. They have become centers of access and equity, community involvement and lifelong learning. Alabama's two-year colleges rank second in the nation in the percentage of the population enrolling in at least one credit course. This focus on the community, on local people, on teaching and learning will continue to distinguish Alabama's two-year colleges from other postsecondary institutions as we enter the 21st century. Two-year colleges are rightfully proud of their success in reaching out to our communities and aggressively meeting the needs of students and taxpayers. This trend will certainly continue and amplify as we enter the next century.

The diversity of the population of Alabama is nowhere more evident than on the campuses of our two-year colleges. In the not-too-distant past, two-year college students were predominantly college-bound teenagers, recently graduated from high school. Today students of Alabama's two-year colleges are all ages and come from all cultural and ethnic backgrounds. Nationally, more than 48 percent of all minority undergraduate students enrolled in higher education attend two-year colleges. In Alabama 28 percent of all students in two-year colleges are minority students. Fifty-six percent are women. Less than 11 percent are the traditional, fresh-from-high school undergraduate students characteristic of the student population thirty years ago. Eighteen percent of Alabama's two-year college students are over forty. Thirty-five percent are over thirty. The average age is twenty-nine. Today, 44 percent of Alabama's two-year college students are part-time students. This compares to a tiny fraction of that number only thirty years ago. In addition, 39 percent are members of special populations, such as single parents, displaced homemakers, and the economically

disadvantaged. Nationally, 46 percent of two-year college students hold full-time jobs. In Alabama it is estimated that even greater numbers of two-year college students hold jobs. Up to 78 percent of our students, in fact, are employed either full-time or part-time. These all represent trends which will accelerate as we enter the 21st century.

More and more, two-year college students will be minority students, older students, women, part-time students, and members of special populations. This means that as we enter the 21st century, increasingly greater numbers of our students, even a majority of our students, will have family commitments and jobs during the period when traditionally scheduled daytime classes are held. Accordingly, two-year colleges of the 21st century will be increasingly characterized by evening and weekend classes, classes offered via television, two-way video, and the Internet. As much as 65 percent of the total undergraduate enrollment in higher education in Alabama is comprised of two-year college students as the 21st century unfolds. As a result of the user-friendly atmosphere of two-year colleges, that number is likely to increase. In Alabama, as elsewhere in the nation, the popularity of two-year colleges will continue to stem, at least in part, from their philosophy of open access and admission, and from their aim of serving the traditionally under-served populations who, without the beneficial influence of the two-year colleges, might not otherwise attend a college at all.

AN OP-ED ESSAY
DR. FRED GAINOUS, CHANCELLOR
ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION

LEADERSHIP PROVIDED BY THE ALABAMA STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

The Alabama State Board of Education has offered significant leadership in addressing efficiency and stewardship in the operation of the two-year colleges of the state. The State Board of Education for much of its recent past has operated under fiscal conservation measures, placing a moratorium on new programs and new spending for two-year colleges. Over the last few years, the State Board of Education, through mergers and consolidations, has reduced the number of two-year colleges from 43 to 30. The most recent merger, that of Alabama Aviation and Technical College with George C. Wallace Community College-Dothan, has just been completed. Identifiable cost savings resulting from mergers amount to $22,189,027 from personnel cost savings, operations cost savings, and equipment cost savings, all of which have been redirected to enhance instructional programs and to improve the teaching and learning environment. In another initiative, this year the Board has closed 192 low enrollment programs in Alabama's two-year colleges, and has deleted 217 non-viable degrees and certificates from the offerings of the two-year colleges. The Board also implemented a retirement incentive program for two-year colleges which reduced fixed personnel costs by $6,000,000. Finally, the State Board of Education is planning an initiative which would implement joint purchasing of computer hardware and software for all of its institutions, resulting in an estimated savings of several hundred thousand dollars per year.

If Alabama is to continue to prosper, its workforce must be more adequately trained and retrained. The Board is pleased to be a partner in the Boeing project, bringing new jobs to Alabama. Continued success must focus on training and retraining the workforce of the state. In the future, all of our citizens will need some level of education beyond high school to be productive members of Alabama's workforce. Only through improved workforce development initiatives will our citizens be prepared for 80 percent of the new jobs available in the next decade, requiring a minimum of two years of college. These factors mandate accessible, high quality academic and technical programs responsive to the needs of working, adult citizens. Access to such opportunities will ensure our state's place in tomorrow's economy.

The mission of Alabama's two-year colleges, as established by the State Board of Education, is to provide accessible quality educational opportunities, to promote economic growth, and to enhance the quality of life for the people of Alabama. Under leadership of the State Board of Education, the two-year colleges provide the freshman and sophomore level of the four-year baccalaureate degree program to students seeking to transfer to universities upon completion of their two-year college experience. Subject to regular review by the Board, the two-year colleges also provide approximately 150 non-baccalaureate vocational/occupational training programs which are designed to prepare adults for employment in specific occupations. They also provide customized training to meet the needs of business and industry throughout the state. In addition, the two-year colleges offer remedial and developmental courses to provide adults the necessary skills and competencies in order for them to take advantage of college level course work and vocational/occupational training programs.

The Board understands the fact that 75 percent of our citizens do not earn a four-year degree. Businesses and industries generally require training equivalent to two years of education beyond high school. At the same time there are thousands of workers who are seeking to maintain their jobs, or to gain the skills to advance in their jobs, through additional training. The State Board of Education ensures that the two-year college system is designed to meet the needs of the great majority of adults who are pursuing postsecondary education. This is an especially important task for community and technical colleges, since today one in every four new jobs goes to a technical worker. It is projected that very soon technical workers in our society will represent 20 percent of the nation's employment. Under the leadership of the State Board of Education the two-year colleges annually provide more than 1,000 businesses and industries with training services for nearly 50,000 employees. It is the firm belief of the State Board of Education that the two-year college system needs to continue its commitment to serve business and industry and to strengthen the workforce development of the State.

Under the Board's supervision the two-year colleges of the State have also been instrumental in piloting and implementing the State's Tech-Prep Program. The Tech-Prep Program establishes a program of hi-tech training encompassing the last two years of high school and the freshman and sophomore years of college, which prepares students for employment in technical occupations. Seven of the two-year colleges house Centers for Excellence in Technology Education, with the latest facilities and equipment to provide special training to those interested in entering hi-tech careers. The Centers for Excellence in Technology Education have been made possible through both federal and state funds. In addition to these initiatives, under the State Board's direction, the two-year colleges are offering Alabama high school students advanced placement and certain college level core curriculum courses, allowing high school students to begin their college experience earlier than they might otherwise do, and saving their parents a considerable amount of money in the process.

Under the supervision of the State Board of Education, in cooperation with the Legislature, representatives from Alabama's public two- and four-year colleges are developing an articulation policy to ease the transition of two-year college students who transfer to four-year schools, and to ensure the transfer of the courses they take. In order to assure appropriate governance and accountability, the State Board of Education has required an annual review of the management structure of all public two-year colleges. Currently, the Department of Examiners of Public Accounts is auditing two-year colleges annually, and the Board has directed the Chancellor of Postsecondary Education to institute an Internal Audit Program. Likewise, under the Board's direction the Chancellor of Postsecondary Education has implemented an Instructional Program Review Process, a comprehensive, multi-year Institutional Management Planning Process and Institutional Effectiveness Policies for all of the State's two-year colleges. The Board has also created a Task Force for Effectiveness Planning in Postsecondary Education, comprised of fifteen leading citizens from across the state to suggest improvements for two-year colleges. A comprehensive report from this Task Force is expected within the next several months.

The Alabama State Board of Education has offered significant leadership in improving the efficiency of two-year colleges and in providing excellent stewardship on behalf of the citizens of Alabama. The state is privileged to be served by such a dedicated, involved, concerned and knowledgeable group.

AN OP-ED ESSAY
DR. FRED GAINOUS, CHANCELLOR
ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION

THE PEOPLE'S COLLEGES

There is a tendency today in some circles to talk about access to postsecondary education as though it were passé. It isn't. In our state, and in many others, achieving the kind of education necessary to be a productive, contributing citizen as the new century unfolds is very much a question of access. Physical access, economic access, social access, cultural access and psycho-developmental access. This access is a special contribution of The Alabama College System to our citizens. Many have worked diligently to establish and maintain access to postsecondary education. It is that postsecondary education which will serve as a bridge for our population from here to the next century.

If our state is to thrive, and our citizens to prosper, we must have low-cost, easily accessible, postsecondary education available to all citizens regardless of their position in life. The issue is not whether we can afford such access, but whether we can afford to be without such access. Alabama's two-year colleges serve Alabama's citizens in their own communities. They are our state's best investment in postsecondary education. We must constantly remind ourselves that a majority of our population will never earn a baccalaureate degree. Perhaps twenty-five percent will do so, and for those whose road to excellence leads in that direction, our community and junior colleges can, and must, help prepare them. As a low-cost, high-quality alternative to the first two years of a university education, our community and junior colleges have no equal. Many students who transfer to universities perform better than the so-called "native" students who began their postsecondary education at the university.

But the real wonder of Alabama's two-year colleges is that they are the only vehicle able to assist the seventy-five percent of our people who will not earn a baccalaureate degree. Alabama's two-year colleges are the only vehicle able to meet the postsecondary educational needs of ordinary people. Paraphrasing an eminent scholar of the two-year colleges, K. Patricia Cross, it doesn't take much skill to turn extraordinary people into success stories. Selective admissions and big scholarships for top high school graduates allow some institutions of higher education to attract extraordinary people to use as evidence of the excellence of their educational system. But, in Alabama's two-year colleges excellent teachers are the evidence of the excellence of our educational system. Excellent teachers stimulate apparently ordinary people to unusual effort and achievement. Two-year colleges tackle the tough problems- - making winners out of ordinary people. That is what education is all about, and that is the specialty of two-year colleges. Alabama's two-year colleges are the unsung, underfunded backbone of the learning process that will produce this state's labor force from now on.

AN OP-ED ESSAY
DR. FRED GAINOUS, CHANCELLOR
ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION

ALABAMA'S TWO-YEAR COLLEGES AND THE SEMESTER SYSTEM

On February 27, 1997, the Alabama State Board of Education authorized Alabama's two-year colleges to convert to a semester based academic calendar, effective in the fall of 1998. The decision to convert from a quarter system to a semester system represents a significant milestone. Prior to State Board authorization, the merits and obstacles of the semester conversion proposal were reviewed and debated thoroughly. After State Board authorization, a variety of committees involving over 1000 administrators, faculty and staff from two-year colleges throughout the state addressed the many details involved in converting to the semester system. The decision to move forward with the semester conversion was guided by the fact that the semester system provides a superior environment for teaching and learning. With 90 percent of postsecondary institutions in the nation already on the semester system; with the majority of high schools in Alabama currently on the semester system; and with all of Alabama's universities either already on, or moving to it; conversion to the semester system will allow the state's two-year colleges to create a seamless transition for students moving from high school – to two-year college – to the university.

Under the semester system, institutions can focus more time on teaching. Students can look forward to spending more time on task to digest and retain course material, which will create an improved teaching and learning environment. There will be additional enhancements in articulation between and among two-year colleges and high schools involving improved transfer of credits, improved high school dual enrollment, and improved scheduling for internships. The conversion will also facilitate a smooth transfer of credits to universities. Other advantages include more opportunities for instructors to assess student progress, more flexibility in scheduling classes, shorter class periods, fewer registration periods/forms and supplies, reduced costs of textbooks to students, reduced financial aid processing time, and increased retention of students.

Unfortunately, there are many misconceptions about converting to a semester system. Students will not require more time to earn a degree under the semester system, nor will they lose credits in the conversion to the semester system. The two-year colleges have made efforts to ensure that the conversion process proceeds smoothly, and that students are well informed and inconvenienced as little as possible.

Although two-year colleges will be increasing tuition next year, it is not based on the conversion to the semester system, but rather on the escalating costs of providing a quality education for Alabama students. The two-year college tuition and fee schedule has not been increased for four years. Unfortunately, with limited state financial support and accelerating educational budgets, rising tuition costs are a trend for all colleges and universities throughout the nation, not just in Alabama. An increase in federal financial assistance for students and the Hope Scholarship tax credit program will pay for the average two-year college tuition for students with limited financial

resources. Tuition rates at Alabama's two-year colleges remain at half of what Alabama public universities are charging. Alabama's two-year colleges are still the best education bargain in the state!

AN OP-ED ESSAY
DR. FRED GAINOUS, CHANCELLOR
ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION

THE COST OF ALABAMA'S TWO-YEAR COLLEGES

In the future, all of our citizens will need some level of education beyond high school to be productive members of Alabama's workforce. Only through improved workforce development initiatives will our citizens be prepared for 80 percent of the new jobs available in the next decade, requiring a minimum of two years of college. Since 75 percent of those working today will still be in the workforce in the next decade, improved adult training opportunities will need to be available for the vast majority of our labor force. These factors mandate accessible, high quality postsecondary academic and technical programs responsive to the needs of working, adult citizens. Access to such postsecondary educational opportunities will ensure our state's place in tomorrow's economy.

But what is the cost to taxpayers for maintaining Alabama's system of two-year colleges which assures access to a brighter future? There are a number of ways of looking at cost. By almost any measure, Alabama's two-year colleges are the best educational bargain in the state. Last year, the two-year colleges of Alabama cost each citizen about 12 cents per day. In the course of a month, each person contributed $3.36 to this state's system of postsecondary education. That means that each citizen contributed less than one-quarter of one percent of per capita income to the operation of two-year colleges over the year.

How does that translate into cost for the average family? The two-year colleges of Alabama last year cost each household in the state about 35 cents a day. In a month's time, each household contributed $9.80 to the state's system of postsecondary education. That means that each household contributed less than one-half of one percent of the median household income to the operation of two-year colleges over the year.

When a two-year college system provides education and job training to nearly 100,000 Alabamians annually at a cost to its citizens less than the price of a can of soda each day, less than the cost of a book in many instances, even less than the cost of a subscription to a magazine or newspaper in many instances, then it is the best educational bargain in the state. When it costs each household less than it spends on cable television, less than it spends on hamburgers, less than it spends on movies, to provide postsecondary education and job training to nearly 100,000 citizens a year, then the two-year college system is the best educational bargain in the state.

To gain the proper perspective on the cost of Alabama's two-year colleges, reflect on this. It is estimated that the annual cost of maintaining a prisoner in Alabama is about $20,000 per prisoner. We have approximately 22,000 inmates in Alabama's prisons. That is a cost of some $440,000,000. Compare 12 cents a day to the cost of ignorance, the cost of crime, the cost of wasted lives. When 12 cents a day brings access to quality postsecondary education and job training, economic growth, and a better quality of life, that's a bargain in anybody's book.

AN OP-ED ESSAY
DR. FRED GAINOUS, CHANCELLOR
ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION

EDUCATION AND EARNING POWER

Two-year colleges are always mindful of how much difference education makes in the earning power of individuals. The growing numbers of adults returning to two-year colleges for job-specific training and retraining reinforce this relationship. The customized training done by two-year colleges for the employees of the state's businesses and industries reinforces this relationship. It is a part of the mission of Alabama's two-year colleges to make a difference in the earning power of individuals.

Just how much difference does education make in the earning power of individuals? A big difference. Consider this. Nationally, average annual earnings of those who do not graduate from high school are $13,697. As individuals climb up the educational ladder, their average annual earnings increase. The earnings of a high school graduate are $20,248. The earnings of a two-year college graduate are $22,226. The earnings of a four-year college graduate are $37,224. Since 1975, the earnings of four-year college graduates have increased by 202 percent. Those of two-year college graduates have increased by 165 percent.

In Alabama and other southern states, the same pattern emerges. As individuals climb up the educational ladder, their earnings increase. In the southern states, monthly earnings of a person who has not graduated from high school are $500. This compares to monthly earnings of $1,100 for high school graduates, $1,700 for two-year college graduates, and $2,100 for four-year college graduates. This is especially significant since personal income in the southern states remains below the national average, the number of children living in poverty is the highest of any region, and the college-going rate is the lowest in the nation.

Beginning in February, the U.S. Department of Labor added to its monthly unemployment statistics a new set of figures showing jobless rates by education level. The new figures demonstrate the role of education in helping people find employment. The unemployment rate for persons over 25 who never graduated from high school is 7.2 percent. This compares to an unemployment rate of 3 percent for high school graduates, 2.2 percent for graduates of two-year colleges, and 1.5 percent for graduates of four-year colleges. This new data confirms that the widening gap in pay which has developed in our society is directly related to education. Education makes a significant difference in the earning power of individuals.

AN OP-ED ESSAY
DR. FRED GAINOUS, CHANCELLOR
ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION

SPECIAL CONTRIBUTIONS OF ALABAMA'S TWO-YEAR COLLEGES

Alabama's two-year colleges prepare the seventy-five percent of our citizens who will not earn a baccalaureate degree so they can become effective, contributing citizens and members of the work force, whether they come directly from high school or come as adults seeking retraining or upgrading of skills. The nature of the work force as we enter the next century can be summed up in one word- -"technician." The occupational history of the state as it has affected the vast majority of our citizens has gone from farmer to laborer to clerk to technician. In the nation right now, one in every four new jobs goes to a technical worker. Very soon, technical workers will represent twenty percent of the national employment, and their numbers will continue to grow.

Alabama's two year colleges are uniquely positioned to provide the kind of education that will produce technicians to build the state's labor force. Broad-technology technicians will be the glue for the future's labor force in Alabama. Individuals who understand underlying principles, and who have the ability to apply what they have learned, will be the core of the labor force. These individuals will be generalists, with specific practical skills to address day-to-day challenges in the work place. These broad-technology technicians will be the key ingredient in the new, amorphous, virtual organizations which more and more characterize business organizations of the coming century- -business organizations which, incidently, have very little room for MBA's and middle level managers. Of the twenty fastest growing occupations, all require education beyond high school, none are low skill, and only three require a baccalaureate degree for entry. Nearly all require a broad-based understanding of technology.

Sometimes the image of the "technician" that pops into people's minds entails keyboards and screens, programming procedures, robots and gadgets. But another reason that Alabama's two-year colleges are such a unique asset to the state of Alabama, is that two-year college staff understand that this isn't the right image at all. Certainly those kinds of things are part of the education of the labor force, but the real image which should come to mind is of people. Being a technician involves understanding technology, but to quote business guru Tom Peters- -"It's About Services!" Currently 96 percent of those employed are in the services sector of the economy. Seventy-nine percent of all employees in the nation now work in the official service sector of the economy (transportation, retail, entertainment, professional services, etc.), while an additional 17 percent who are involved in service work (design, engineering, finance, marketing, sales, distribution, purchasing, etc.) Are employed in the manufacturing sector. Nobody is well educated, and nobody is going to be a successful part of the labor force who fails to work effectively with other people. So, a generous sprinkling of the so-called "people skills" must go into the preparation of students. For years, two-year colleges, in Alabama and nationally, have been famous for their ability to provide a more student-centered learning environment- -working with people. Two-year colleges have long trained technicians in teamwork, in interpersonal communication skills, and in working with people.

Another area in which two-year colleges make a special contribution to our state is in teaching people to deal with change. With traditional definitions of worker competence being shattered, with traditional styles of business organization literally disappearing, with global competition and with corporations spanning the globe, what was once a secure, predictable work place no longer exists. Business leaders like Tom Peters and Stephen Covey openly state that there is no such thing as job security in the "one-company-for-life" sense of the term anymore. This is a frightening prospect to many people. It challenges their need for stability. Two-year colleges teach students to anticipate change as a constant. Students are encouraged to embrace change- -not shrink from it, and to understand that change can be invigorating and necessary.

The three R's of education- -reading, 'riting, and 'rithmetic- -have now been joined by the three C's- -computing, critical thinking, and capacity for change. It is because the capacity for change is so critical to our students that skills such as problem solving, abstract reasoning, interpretation and synthesis of information, and the application of knowledge to problems have become essential survival skills. Two-year colleges realize that if we can teach students to think in terms of understanding connections and relationships as their bag of tools, and their ability to apply what they know as their most important skill, we will have helped prepare them for the virtual business reality in which they must live.

In summary, Alabama's two-year colleges are the key to our survival as we face the future. They are the bridge for our population from here to the next century. They are the only vehicle able to meet the postsecondary educational needs of ordinary people. They are the most important entity preparing broad-technology technicians for our labor force. They are the best vehicle for imparting "people skills" to our labor force, and, they are the best vehicle for preparing our citizens to learn to deal with change.

AN OP-ED ESSAY
DR. FRED GAINOUS, CHANCELLOR
ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION

WHY DO WE HAVE TWO-YEAR COLLEGES?

The one thing that most characterizes our time is change. Once upon a time we used to describe it as rapid change. For a while we referred to it as substantial change, but now there is no denying it. It is radical change. Every day our environment is changing radically. The demographics of our society are changing radically. The economy is changing radically. The social values and lifestyles in our society are changing radically. The technology of our society is changing radically. In an environment where so much change is happening so often, those who have not learned that we will need to continue learning throughout life have no survival skills. That is why we have two-year colleges.

Consider, for example, that our society in the future will be a "mosaic society." All aspects of American society will reflect minority population growth. According to the most recent census, in the last decade the Asian population in the United States grew 108 percent. The Hispanic population grew 53 percent. The Black population grew 13 percent, and the U.S. white population grew 6 percent. The workplace in which young adults will operate will continue to become increasingly multi-cultural, reflecting a similar change in communities and other institutions in our society. Just 9 percent of new workers during the next decade will be non-Hispanic white males. This new more heterogenous society will create new opportunities and will generate new challenges and tensions. Learning how to perform in a multi-cultural work environment will be critical. That is why we have two-year colleges.

The economy of our society in the future will be characterized by transition and dislocation, by a competition for global wealth, and by equal access to technologies. Those economies which succeed will be characterized by the ability of their workforce to meet world class standards. Improved productivity by itself will not necessarily provide a competitive advantage. Advantage will come from the capacity to produce and deliver customized quality and variety in a timely and affordable fashion. This economic transition can only occur with a highly educated frontline workforce. The key industries of society will all be "brain power" industries – micro-electronics, biotechnology, civilian aviation, ceramics/composites, robots and machine tools, and computers and software. Unfortunately, opportunities for success outside of these areas will shrink drastically. Temporary part-time workers already make up a full 25 percent of the U.S. workforce. In constant dollars, male high school graduates aged 20-24 earn 25 percent less than their counterparts earned 15 years ago. Most routine, manual kinds of jobs are being eliminated by technology. The average worker now works six more hours per week than in 1973. Over the past 20 years employee satisfaction has diminished for every major aspect of a job including salary, benefits, hours, and personal satisfaction for all but those workers possessing specialized knowledge and skills. Only through a commitment to continuing education and a realization of the need for lifelong learning in order to maintain high skills in the workforce will society prosper. That is why we have two-year colleges.

Advances in parallel processing, software development, micro-electronics, photonics, and nanotechnology have announced the dawn of thinking machines. Telecommunication of information will increasingly take the form of machine-to-machine communication. Computers with artificial intelligence will screen and limit information as the amount and speed of data transmission increase. Scientists are creating massive parallel computers in an attempt to move away from sequential thinking, and engineers are beginning to program human experience into software. We have become the first species able to influence and shape our own biological future through genetic technology. A protein-based computer chip has been developed which has the potential for reproducing itself. Researchers will soon be able to custom build single molecules that can store and process information and manipulate or fabricate other molecules, including themselves. Technicians hold the future of society. That is why we have two-year colleges.

We stand on the threshold of a new and very different society. A society where not using or not having the opportunity to achieve life-long learning and the skills to use technology will be a liability. Society will continue to become more mental than muscular. Unless Alabamians have learned how to learn and have learned the importance of continuing to learn throughout life, this new society may be a hostile environment. In order for us to help ourselves, and in order for us to help others in society it is essential that we develop the specialized knowledge and skills which will allow us to function in this new society, where the knowledge and skills which will allow us to adapt and survive will be outdated in a year to two. Broad based access to postsecondary education is essential. That is why we have two-year colleges.

AN OP-ED ESSAY
DR. FRED GAINOUS, CHANCELLOR
ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION

PROMOTING ECONOMIC GROWTH THROUGH WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Alabama's two-year colleges have reached out actively into their constituent communities to assess the need for vocational/occupational training, and have become sensitive to the fact that those individuals most in need of training for employment, workforce training, and education for career advancement are often the same individuals who are unfamiliar with a campus environment, and are least likely to seek needed services. Consequently, two-year colleges have attempted, through physical proximity and through outreach, to meet the demand for workforce training by creating more flexible scheduling and nontraditional delivery systems, offering evening and weekend courses to accommodate employed students, developing and implementing specialized or customized training to meet the needs of employers, and by serving over 2,050 businesses and industries across the state, affecting some 43,000 employees.

The Alabama College System is uniquely positioned to serve as the catalyst for workforce development in the state. It has a complete array of training delivery systems which can be used to serve the citizens of Alabama. Approximately 150 occupational/vocational training programs result in a variety of certificate and degree awards available to those who have college level skills. These training programs very in length from a few weeks to two years and lead directly to employment. For those participants lacking college level skills, The Alabama College System has a close working relationship with the Adult Basic Education Program operated by the Alabama Department of Education. This program prepares adults who are not high school graduates for the General Education Diploma. Often offered on two-year college campuses, it provides adults with skills equivalent to those of high school graduates. For first-time students requiring additional assistance, routine assessment to identify special learning needs is provided which identifies exactly what kinds of skills need to be improved. The colleges offer a full range of tutoring and remedial/developmental classes and services to remedy skills deficiencies in order to prepare program participants to receive the full benefit of their occupational/vocational program. In addition, special orientation and transition services and programs are provided to ensure student success.

Alabama's two-year colleges have a long history of providing vocational, technical, and career training in fields that reflect the needs of their local economies--often providing some of the most sophisticated training available anywhere in new and emerging technologies. Alabama's two-year colleges have a close working relationship with local constituents, including local business and industry, many of whose representatives sit on the college's numerous program advisory boards. Two-year colleges already provide a variety of training programs and services to small and medium-sized businesses where the unmet need for worker training is the greatest.

Alabama's two-year colleges have been successful in providing programs and services for adult students, who make up the bulk of the existing workforce that requires additional training and

retraining. Two-year colleges have long served special populations including the educationally and economically disadvantaged, individuals with disabilities, dislocated workers, single parents, displaced homemakers, and criminal offenders. Two-year colleges have invested in alternative delivery mechanisms, including infrastructure for providing distance education and instructional technology to support independent learning, which are well-positioned to serve adult learners who are often unable to attend regularly scheduled classes on a college campus due to work and family commitments.

Alabama's two-year colleges have also invested heavily in support services for students, especially in student assessment, counseling, educational planning and academic advising, tutoring and remedial education, career development, and job placement that are vital in supporting nontraditional adult education. Two-year colleges provide quick response to changes in local and regional labor market supply/demand characteristics, resulting in new training programs for business and industry. The Alabama College System can provide pre-vocational skills training and post-training follow-up to prepare students to complete training successfully, and to facilitate the transition from training to the workplace.

When it comes to workforce training, customized training for business and industry, and economic development in general, convenient access to postsecondary education and training is everything. Alabama's two-year colleges are the best vehicle for promoting economic growth through workforce development.

OP-ED ESSAYS:
SHARING THE PERSPECTIVE OF ALABAMA'S TWO-YEAR COLLEGES

FRED GAINOUS, CHANCELLOR
THE ALABAMA COLLEGE SYSTEM

June 11, 1999

Vol. II

CONTENTS

Page

Foreword 1

National Workforce Development Study Shows Critical Importance of Two-Year Colleges 3

Remedial/Developmental Education in Two-Year Colleges 5

Alabama's Two-Year Colleges and Market-Based Learning 7

Alabama's School-to-Work Initiative 9

Who Governs? 11

Alabama's Articulation Initiative 13

Alabama's Dual Enrollment Initiative 15

Alabama's Best Source of Workforce Training 17

Women, Postsecondary Education, and the Economy 18

The Quiet Revolution in Workforce Training 19

FOREWORD

THE ALABAMA COLLEGE SYSTEM

MISSION STATEMENT

The Alabama College System, consisting of public two-year community, junior, and technical colleges and an upper division college, seeks to provide accessible quality educational opportunities, promote economic growth, and enhance the quality of life for the people of Alabama.

Alabama's public two-year colleges were established 30 years ago to accomplish the mission outlined above. Because they are a special component of higher education with a special mission, they offer an important perspective for consideration by the public and by policy makers. This unique perspective is built on the following principles:

- Public policy decisions to provide universal access to educational opportunities beyond high school have created the two-year college. Central to the mission of the two-year college is the principle that people of all ages, of all races, of all stations in life, and in all geographic regions should have access. Success in providing access to the two-year college is judged by the degree to which persons from all socio-economic, cultural, and racial and ethnic backgrounds; students of all ages and gender; and students disabled by various physical or learning disabilities enroll in and succeed in college level programs. Inherent in access is a commitment to an "open door" policy which provides meaningful access to all constituents in the service area who can benefit from college programs and services. A special commitment of the two-year college is to attract and serve students who are traditionally under-represented in higher education.

- The Alabama College System is committed to providing barrier-free access to quality instructional programs and activities within a reasonable commuting distance of each student. Population trends, socio-economic status, ethnicity, age, gender, and prior learning conditions have significant implications for the future of postsecondary education in the State of Alabama. Factors such as these impact the quality and effectiveness of The Alabama College System in accomplishing its mission. Such demographic factors affect how well an institution of postsecondary education serves its students and the residents of its service area.

- Alabama's two-year colleges have reached out actively into their constituent communities to assess the need for vocational/occupational training. They have become sensitive to the fact that those individuals most in need of training for employment, workforce training, and education for career advancement are often the same individuals who are unfamiliar with a campus environment, and are least likely to seek needed services. The Alabama College System is positioned to serve as the catalyst for workforce development in the state. It has a complete array of training delivery systems which can be used to serve the citizens of Alabama.

- As a public resource, each institution of The Alabama College System should have sufficient support from state and local sources so that each may accomplish its role, scope, and mission without adverse impact on institutional operations, services, or students.

- System structure should be determined by the colleges' abilities to be flexible and to respond aggressively to the diverse needs of both students and employers. The colleges should be at the center of regional economic development efforts. System structure should be based on access, delivering more instruction to more people. Educational delivery systems should produce cost efficiencies, provide enhanced instructional and student services, provide improved programs and services to businesses and industries, and contribute to the economic and cultural health of the communities in which the colleges are located.

- The citizens of Alabama are entitled to access to programs that enhance the quality of life, prepare them to be producers of goods and services, and assist them to be lifelong learners. Services include: occupational/technical education, academic transfer education, literacy education, continuing education, student support services, workforce development, and cultural and civic awareness.

- The overriding consideration and dominant factor for decision-making in The Alabama College System institutions must be quality. It affects and permeates each facet of the institutions. Neither resource allocation nor policy development should impact negatively The Alabama College System and its ability to deliver services.

- The Alabama College System is committed to a seamless transition for the secondary student entering from high school, for the college student moving between and among colleges and universities, and for the adult who comes from business and industry or life.

AN OP-ED ESSAY
DR. FRED GAINOUS, CHANCELLOR
ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION

NATIONAL WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT STUDY SHOWS CRITICAL IMPORTANCE OF TWO-YEAR COLLEGES

Alabama's two-year colleges were represented in the National Workforce Development Study recently completed by Tony Zeiss and Associates. That study reveals the critical importance of two-year colleges in Alabama and across the nation as we move into the new economy. Globalization, the technology revolution, tremendous changes in standards, and the increased emphasis on quality have had a profound impact on business organizations in Alabama and elsewhere. As the National Workforce Development Study notes, never in our history have employers been confronted with such a critical need to maintain the high skill levels of their employees in order to compete.

As much as 75 percent of the existing workforce, including the workforce in Alabama, will require significant job retraining in the next decade, and up to 80 percent of the new jobs created during that time will require at least two years of postsecondary education. Nearly 50 million workers will need additional training within the next ten years to keep up with employer skill demands. The bulk of these workers will need technical training, customer service training or basic skills training. In addition, 37 million new workers will require entry-level training.

The National Workforce Development Study surveyed American employers to determine the extent of their training needs. This included a number of the more than 1,000 employers served each year by Alabama's two-year colleges. Nearly 80 percent of employers estimated that a quarter or more of their workforce required training. More than one-fifth of employers estimated that from 76 to 100 percent of their workforce required training. Employers surveyed identified the following as the most needed areas of training for their employees: professional development, computer skills, interpersonal skills, critical thinking skills, communication skills, business skills, understanding of government regulations, personal skills, technical skills, and computational skills.

The great bulk of employers surveyed in the National Workforce Development Study, including those in Alabama, chose two-year colleges to meet their workforce needs. Approximately 90 percent of employers were familiar with the workforce development programs and services of two-year colleges. When asked why they chose two-year colleges to meet their workforce development needs, four major reasons emerged from the survey: cost effectiveness, ability to customize training, responsiveness/access, and quality of instruction. In addition, though not included as a survey item, one in ten of all comments by employers focused on the responsiveness and flexibility of two-year college administrative staff, described as having a "can do attitude" and "often going beyond the call of duty."

When asked to rate the quality of their experiences with two-year colleges, the quality of the training provided was rated "good" or "excellent" by 96 percent of employers. College responsiveness to employer needs was rated "good" or "excellent" by over 90 percent of employers. The bottom line rating for the study, however, asked employers if they would recommend two-year college workforce training programs and services to other businesses. To that question, 95 percent reported that they would recommend two-year college workforce training programs to others.

The National Workforce Development Study makes it clear that two-year colleges are critical to our economy, to the health and productivity of our businesses, and to the well being and prosperity of our workforce as we enter the new economy. Currently, the two-year colleges of Alabama provide training to approximately 50,000 employees of the state's businesses and industries each year. Community economic development through workforce training is at the core of the mission of Alabama's two-year colleges. The volume of such activity at two-year colleges continues to increase, indicating the growing extent to which the business community looks to two-year colleges to help meet its unique workforce development needs. This could not be articulated more eloquently than by one of the employers involved in the National Workforce Development Study, who said, "We would not be where we are today...facing the many challenges of competing in the global marketplace...if it had not been for the quality instruction provided our employees through the college. Not only have our employees benefitted, but the community at large has benefitted."

AN OP-ED ESSAY
DR. FRED GAINOUS, CHANCELLOR
ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION

REMEDIAL/DEVELOPMENTAL EDUCATION IN TWO-YEAR COLLEGES

Each term, Alabama's two year colleges offer remedial/developmental courses to about 8,000 of their 88,000 students. Most of these courses are in reading, English, and mathematics. The purpose of remedial/developmental education is to assist students in achieving college-level skills and competencies so they can succeed in accomplishing their educational goals. Virtually all community colleges in the nation offer remedial/developmental assistance. The mission and goals of public two-year colleges reflect the needs of the communities they serve. When people in the community need assistance to achieve college-level skills and competencies, two-year colleges meet that need. It is vital to the welfare of our state that they do so.

Eighty percent of the new jobs available in the next decade will require a minimum of two years of postsecondary education. Eighty-five percent of all jobs will require skilled workers or professionals. Seventy-five percent of the people working today will still be in the workforce in the next decade and will require continuous, higher level training in order to advance. Our society, nationally and locally, cannot thrive in the new economy unless we make postsecondary education and training accessible to the broadest possible range of citizens, including those who require remedial/developmental assistance.

Students attending two-year colleges today are more career oriented than ever. More than 70 percent of two-year college students in a recent sample indicate that their educational goal is to improve job skills, prepare for a career change, prepare to enter the job market, or decide on a career. More and more adults are returning to two-year colleges to change and/or improve their job skills and competencies. In today's increasingly automated and technical workplace, workers who graduated from high school only a few years ago are likely to require remedial/developmental assistance. Such workers are returning to two-year colleges in huge numbers across the nation. Two-year colleges often partner with businesses to provide such training. If we do not provide remedial/developmental assistance to these students, our workforce cannot compete in the global economy. Postsecondary education is the key to competitiveness. We cannot fail to assist students in achieving the skills they need to assure our collective economic future.

It is inaccurate to associate remedial/developmental education with recent high school graduates, and, therefore, to view it as a "K-12 problem." The average age of today's two-year college student, both nationally and in Alabama, is 29. Two-thirds of remedial/developmental students in Alabama's two-year colleges are <u>not</u> recent high school graduates. Most entered the workforce several years ago and are returning to improve their skills in order to secure a better job, or a better position in the job they already have. Many support families and pay taxes as they attend classes. Many pay for their educational improvement efforts without outside financial assistance. Nationally, 60 percent of remedial/developmental students at two-year colleges do not receive the

financial aid available to traditional students. These working adult students are a far cry from those associated with the K-12 educational effort. As adults, they require educational assistance designed for adults–postsecondary education.

Most two-year college students who need assistance receive an average of one to one and a half hours of remedial/developmental instruction a day, and complete their remedial/developmental work by the end of the first term. Two-thirds of two-year college students successfully complete their remedial/developmental work. Those who complete their remedial/developmental work are as successful academically as students who do not require remedial/developmental assistance. Over 75 percent of two-year college students who receive remedial/developmental assistance remain in school through the first year, earning a grade point average of "C" or better.

What does it cost the taxpayers of Alabama to provide remedial/developmental assistance to two-year college students? It costs each citizen of Alabama only $1.49 per year to provide remedial/developmental assistance to those who are attempting to secure new jobs or to advance in jobs they already have. This translates to a cost to each household in Alabama of only $4.20 per year to help ensure, through remedial/developmental education, a quality workforce for the state and training opportunities for all citizens. Weigh this against the cost of the growing number of dependent citizens, and the cost of a growing underclass, produced by increasing poverty, drugs, unemployment and a breakdown in family life. The only way to ensure continued growth and prosperity is to ensure that all Americans possess the skills they need to build productive careers. A growing number of economists indicate that the widening income gap between rich and poor will ultimately hold back the entire economy. The only solution to these problems is to assist individuals to become independent and self sufficient through training and educational opportunities. Two-year college remedial/developmental programs are essential to that process. In the final analysis, remedial/developmental education is a bargain.

AN OP-ED ESSAY
DR. FRED GAINOUS, CHANCELLOR
ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION

ALABAMA'S TWO-YEAR COLLEGES AND MARKET-BASED LEARNING

Many employers and employees today value skills and competencies rather than degrees and certificates. The average age of two-year college students in Alabama is 29. A large number entered the workforce several years ago and are returning to improve their skills and competencies in order to secure better jobs or better positions in the jobs they already have. They will continue to return for that purpose during their working lifetimes. Often they are taxpayers supporting families. These students are designing their own education based on personal need, and are not pursuing a degree or certificate, but specific job related skills and competencies. Many are seeking these skills and competencies on a part-time basis over a period which might extend to several years.

Eighty percent of the new jobs available in the next decade will require a minimum of two years of postsecondary education. Eighty-five percent of all jobs will require skilled workers or professionals. Seventy-five percent of the people working today will still be in the workforce in the next decade, and will require continuous, higher level training in order to advance. Employees must come to grips with the need for lifelong learning in order to maintain productive employment.

Employers are frantically seeking skilled workers. According to a recent study, nearly 100 percent of the nation's employers indicate that all their existing workers will need additional training by the year 2000. Eighty-eight percent of American manufacturers indicate that they are experiencing a shortage of qualified workers. This has resulted in 76 million adult learners seeking skills and competencies at postsecondary institutions. Of that number only 11.5 million, or 15 percent, are pursuing degrees or certificates. The others are pursuing alternative options which will give them the skills and competencies which employers are seeking.

This means that in order to deal with today's social reality, Alabama's two-year colleges must offer the broadest possible access so that all Alabamians gain the skills they need to build productive careers. Alabama's two-year colleges must operate flexibly, continue to partner with industry, and assume an expanded role in workforce development and community development. In order to accomplish this, educational policy must support market need. In Alabama, as in other states, outmoded bureaucratic regulations which inhibit market-based learning must be revised.

For example, regulations which measure the effectiveness of programs in terms of the number of degrees or certificates awarded must be recognized as outmoded hindrances to employers and students. A huge volume of adult students are returning to two-year colleges during their working lifetime, to pursue skills and competencies, rather than degrees and certificates. They seek to improve their employment prospects at a time when employers seek workers with specific skills and competencies rather than degrees and certificates. Under such circumstances, it makes no sense to judge programs in terms of the number of degrees and certificates awarded within a three-year period.

Similarly, with the incredible demand for training and retraining, and the hue and cry from employers from all segments of business and industry for more training and more highly educated workers, regulations which restrict efforts to bring educational services to locations convenient to consumers are detrimental to both employers and students. Likewise, regulations which slow the response of institutions to the demands of educational consumers injure both employers and employees. Counting the number of places where educational services are offered, counting the number of people at those locations, and requiring a year or more for the approval of programs to train employees are simply archaic measures which ignore the reality of today's educational process--market-based learning and sensitivity to educational consumers.

At a cost to each household in the state of about 35 cents a day, two-year colleges provide education and training to almost 100,000 Alabamians. For less than the price of a can of soda for each household each day, Alabama's two-year colleges provide market-based learning and consumer sensitivity in education in order to meet the critical training needs of employees and employers. Market-based learning and consumer sensitivity in education will position Alabama for economic survival in the global competition of the 21st century if educational policy supports market need.

AN OP-ED ESSAY
DR. FRED GAINOUS, CHANCELLOR
ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION

ALABAMA'S SCHOOL-TO-WORK INITIATIVE

The School-to-Work Initiative is a way for Alabama to produce a world class workforce ready for the global competition of the 21st century. The School-to-Work Initiative brings the workplace into the classroom, and takes the classroom into the workplace. It brings the workplace into the classroom by integrating actual job-related skills and competencies into the curriculum, and by bringing representatives of business, industry and labor into the classroom to serve as coaches and mentors for students as they pursue their career goals. It brings the classroom into the workplace by introducing job-shadowing, non-paid internships, and apprenticeships into vocational/occupational educational programs. In addition, in many school-to-work situations, teachers actually spend time during the summer in jobs related to the skills which their students will be pursuing. This helps them be certain that they understand the requirements of the workplace, and it enables them to relate relevant, practical information to their students.

The School-to-Work Initiative creates paths which students can follow to move from school to a good first job. It combines quality academic skills with hands-on learning and training in the workplace. It builds partnerships between schools and employers so that local schools can better meet local economic needs.

The State Board of Education believes that bringing work-related skills and competencies into the classroom, bringing representatives of business and industry into the classroom, taking students to the work site, and taking teachers to the work site will help develop effective partnerships which will produce students who can meet the needs of Alabama's employers. Linking vocational/occupational education at the K-12 level with postsecondary level training offered by two-year colleges will ensure more advanced skills to meet the requests from employers for more highly trained workers.

Under the leadership of the State Board of Education, the two-year colleges of Alabama have been instrumental in developing this School-to-Work Initiative and have had prior experience in this arena. At the direction of the State Board of Education, they have formed over the last few years 28 Tech-Prep consortia in cooperation with more than one hundred local school districts. The Tech-Prep program focuses on a smooth transition from high school to postsecondary training for students pursuing vocational/occupational skills and competencies. The linking of the Tech-Prep network already in existence with the School-to-Work Initiative is a logical next step to continued improvement of the workforce produced by Alabama's educational system.

Alabama is fortunate to have two functioning School-to-Work programs in the state which serve as models of the School-to-Work Initiative as it will be implemented throughout the state. Is the program successful? The valedictorian of the 1998 graduating class of one of the Alabama schools is a participant in the School-to-Work program. The student began job shadowing, went

through an unpaid internship and an apprenticeship. She is currently employed in the local community pursuing her career.

The successful linking of K-12 and postsecondary institutions, the establishment of school-based work-related learning, work based learning, and the formation of partnerships with businesses and industries are the key ingredients which make the School-to-Work Initiative effective in meeting the needs of employers and the expectations of young people. Graduates of the School-to-Work Initiative in Alabama will have recognized skills and competencies directly related to employment in jobs which are available in their communities. The School-to-Work Initiative brings educators together with employers, workers and parents to plan and implement an effective system for their local communities. Local employers in need of more highly skilled workers form effective partnerships with their local school systems and two-year colleges to help produce those workers. Through the School-to-Work Initiative everyone who participates benefits.

AN OP-ED ESSAY
DR. FRED GAINOUS, CHANCELLOR
ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION

WHO GOVERNS?

Recently the relationship between the Alabama State Board of Education and the Alabama Commission on Higher Education has been portrayed as a "feud," or as a contest involving "expansion" and "duplication," and as a "costly burden to taxpayers." The "feud/expansion/duplication/costly burden to taxpayers" rhetoric in which this issue has been couched is uninformed and misleading. None of those is the issue. The issue is the legal and constitutional standing of the State Board of Education to serve as the ultimate governing authority for Alabama's two-year colleges.

The Alabama Constitution and statutes adopted pursuant to the Constitution clearly establish the State Board of Education as the sole, ultimate governing authority for Alabama's two-year colleges in all respects. In order for those colleges to continue to be accredited, the State Board of Education must demonstrate that it is the sole, ultimate governing authority for two-year colleges, and that it protects its colleges from micro-managing external entities.

Last year, the Governor and both houses of the legislature recognized the Alabama State Board of Education as the sole governing authority for Alabama's public two-year colleges. In his October 15, 1997 correspondence regarding this matter the Governor stated, "...the Legislature intended the State Board of Education to be the ultimate authority in the governance of Alabama's two-year colleges...." He further described ACHE's relationship to the two-year colleges as "...very limited in its scope and authority."

The issue is not "off-campus "instruction. The operation of non-permanent instructional sites away from the two-year college campuses is inherent in the mission of two-year colleges. These sites exist to serve the special needs of businesses, industries and the communities in which they are located. It is essential that this be done. Eighty percent of new jobs available over the next decade will require a minimum of two years of postsecondary education. Seventy-five percent of those working today will still be in the labor force during that time, and will require continuous higher level training. Taking postsecondary training to the people who need it at locations convenient to them is one of the keys to Alabama's economic future.

ACHE at its last meeting attempted to block the State Board of Education's efforts to provide training, at the request of the company, to International Paper at its Riverdale Mill; to provide sonography training in Montgomery, requested by area hospitals; to provide computer and secretarial skills leading to employment, requested by the Huntsville Housing Authority; and to provide high school students college courses in Anniston and Cleburne County. The State Board of Education is committed to using its legal and constitutional authority to meet the critical need in Alabama for postsecondary level training and education.

"Expansion" and "duplication" are not at issue in this question of legal and constitutional authority. Last year the State Board of Education closed 192 programs and terminated 217 non-viable degrees and certificates at two-year colleges. Just this week the Board closed an additional 137 programs and terminated 152 non-viable degrees and certificates. The Board terminated seven two-year college instructional sites this year, and nine such instructional sites last year. Two-year colleges do not receive more funds from the taxpayers for bigger enrollments. The notion that non-permanent sites away from two-year college campuses is a drain on state funds is a myth. As a group, these sites are self-supporting and operate at no cost to the taxpayers.

The issue at hand is much greater than a "feud" between government agencies. Its implications are much more profound than "expansion" and "duplication." The issue is the role of the people in deciding who governs two-year colleges. At stake is the ability of the sovereign people of Alabama to elect those who govern the state's two-year colleges. At stake is the authority of those elected by the sovereign people of Alabama to govern the state's two-year colleges.

AN OP-ED ESSAY
DR. FRED GAINOUS, CHANCELLOR
ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION

ALABAMA'S ARTICULATION INITIATIVE

As the result of the leadership of the Alabama State Board of Education, the legislature created the Articulation and General Studies Committee in 1996. Some have described this as the single most important change in postsecondary education in the last decade. Composed of representatives from all four-year institutions and community and junior colleges in the state, the group elects its own chair annually, rotating between a representative of four-year and two-year institutions. Under its direction, hundreds of faculty and staff members have worked to create an academic road map for all students transferring to Alabama's public colleges and universities. Follow the map and all courses transfer. This is the first such road map in the state's history.

The mandate of this Committee was to develop, no later than September 1, 1998, a statewide college freshman and sophomore level general studies curriculum to be taken at all Alabama colleges and universities. By no later than September 1, 1999, this group must develop a statewide articulation agreement for the transfer of credit among all public institutions of higher education. The combination of these two activities means that all applicable credits transferred from a community or junior college to a four-year institution will fulfill degree requirements at the four-year institution as if they were earned there.

The Committee has worked to permit flexibility among institutions with respect to the specific courses which they offer to students in fulfilling the requirements of the general studies curriculum. The Committee has also avoided increasing the credit hour requirements for completing the bachelor's degree. The creation of a statewide college freshman and sophomore level general studies curriculum to be taken at all public colleges and universities in Alabama has been completed.

Students and parents can now plan ahead, knowing with certainty which courses are part of the statewide college freshman and sophomore level general studies curriculum to be taken at all Alabama colleges and universities. These courses consist of six semester credit hours of written composition; twelve semester credit hours of humanities and fine arts; eleven semester credit hours of natural science and mathematics; and twelve semester credit hours of history, social and behavioral sciences. In addition to these 41 credit hours in core courses, students may also transfer up to 23 credit hours in elective courses. Credit hours equal to half of the total number of hours required for a bachelor's degree, not to exceed 64, are guaranteed to transfer from Alabama's community and junior colleges to four-year colleges and universities.

Students who take the courses in the commonly accepted general studies curriculum at a community or junior two-year college will be able to transfer every course to a university. At last students can be certain that they will not lose credits as they transfer from Alabama's community and junior colleges to four-year colleges and universities. At long last the institutions of postsecondary education in the state will act as a single unit in serving the needs of students.

For more information or academic planning using the new road map provided by the Articulation and General Studies Committee, parents and students should contact their local community or junior college; visit the web site at www.troyst.edu, click on Public Services, then click on Statewide Articulation Network; or call this toll free number, 1-800-551-9716, extension 3690.

AN OP-ED ESSAY
DR. FRED GAINOUS, CHANCELLOR
ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION

ALABAMA'S DUAL ENROLLMENT INITIATIVE

Partnerships between high schools and two-year colleges are recognized throughout the nation as important tools for enhancing learning opportunities. In Alabama, because high schools and two-year colleges are governed by the same State Board of Education, such cooperative efforts are implemented more easily than in some other states. One such cooperative project to enhance opportunities for learning is the dual enrollment initiative.

The Alabama State Board of Education on April 24, 1997, enabled the two-year colleges of Alabama to establish dual enrollment programs with local boards of education in their respective service areas. The State Board of Education's action allows eligible high school students to enroll in college classes concurrently with high school classes, either on the college campus or at the high school, and to receive both high school and college credit for such classes.

Dual enrollment offers high school students the chance to earn college credit while still in high school. Such programs prepare students for college and provide motivation and reinforcement for students uncertain of their ability. Dual enrollment helps them overcome the fear of failure, and gives them a taste of what to expect when they enter college. Such programs can also serve as a cure for the boredom and misbehavior often associated with "senioritis." Dual enrollment presents a new intellectually stimulating challenge to students having already fulfilled the basic requirements for graduation.

Through dual enrollment, many students can discover that the dream of a college education is well within their reach. Thus, dual enrollment can improve access to postsecondary education. This is especially important in view of the fact that 80 percent of the new jobs available over the next decade will require a minimum of two-years of postsecondary education.

Dual enrollment also benefits parents. It permits them to start their children on the path toward a college education incrementally, and at a relatively low rate of tuition. Dual enrollment also allows parents to assess their children's ability to perform college-level work before making a full psychological and financial commitment to a college education.

This past year marked the first school year that dual enrollment could be undertaken in Alabama. In the fall term, twelve two-year colleges were actively engaged in dual enrollment programs with high schools in their areas, involving 455 high school students. By spring term 1998, sixteen two-year colleges were actively engaged in dual enrollment programs with high schools in their areas.

The latest study of dual enrollment indicates that even dual enrollment programs which include students in the "C" and "D" levels of their sophomore high school classes improve the

likelihood of participants graduating from high school and entering college. Students in dual enrollment programs excel in college level work while in high school, regardless of sex, race or class rank. The high school graduation rate for students in dual enrollment programs is higher than that for other students. Students in dual enrollment programs complete their college level courses at a significantly higher rate than that for all college freshmen. The pass rate in college courses for students in dual enrollment programs is higher than that for all college freshmen. Dual enrollment works.

Dual enrollment broadens the range of educational services available through the local high school without significant cost to taxpayers. The Board's leadership places Alabama among the growing ranks of states across the nation developing dual enrollment programs.

AN OP-ED ESSAY
DR. FRED GAINOUS, CHANCELLOR
ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION

ALABAMA'S BEST SOURCE OF WORKFORCE TRAINING

Most Alabamians are aware of the tremendous positive impact made by the number of jobs in our state offered by foreign owned international giants such as Dunlop Tire, Gates Rubber, JVC, Mercedes-Benz, Michelin, Mitsubishi, Shell Oil, and Sony. Most Alabamians do not appreciate the impact on jobs in our state made by the 218 other Alabama industrial establishments owned in full or in part by a foreign parent company. Such companies from 28 nations now operate in Alabama, offering valuable goods, services, and thousands of jobs. These companies offer jobs from Andalusia, Danville and Elba to Theodore, Wetumpka and York. They operate across the state, not just in "the big cities." They produce a vast array of products including customized machine tools, corrugated containers, industrial chemicals and gases, non-clay refractories, non-ferrous machine parts, computerized numerically controlled tools, computer chassis, electric motors, fiber optics, defense hardware, magnetic tape machinery, water heaters, air conditioners, telecommunication equipment, and pharmaceuticals.

Alabama, like the rest of the nation, now operates in a global economy. In fact, the U.S. has become the largest importer of foreign capital. The companies of other countries are offering jobs to Alabamians, and Alabamians are competing with workers in other countries. The levels of knowledge and training, as well as the standards of excellence and performance, expected of workers in other countries are expected of Alabamians. The global economy is with us in Alabama right now, and it is changing the nature of jobs in Alabama. The new jobs are different from "drive it, dig it, lift it, or pick it" jobs characteristic of the traditional Alabama economy. Automobile assembly, steelmaking and fabrication, health care, pharmaceutical production, electronics, computer components and their various support businesses have blossomed. This has meant a rapid growth in the number of jobs which are classified as high-skill occupations.

The new economy which we are experiencing in Alabama today is a knowledge-based economy. Increased levels of education and increasingly sophisticated levels of training have become the key to earning a living. It takes education beyond high school to gain the skills and competencies necessary to earn a middle-income wage in our new economy. Employers continue to demand more highly educated and skilled workers. For those with only a high school diploma, median earnings have declined since 1976.

Eighty percent of the new jobs available over the next decade will require a minimum of two-years of postsecondary education. Eighty-five percent of all jobs will require skilled workers or professionals. Seventy-five percent of the people working today will still be in the labor force in the next decade, requiring continuous higher level training. Seventy-five percent of Alabamians will not attain a four-year college degree. Two-year colleges are the immediate means for ensuring that the levels of knowledge and training and the standards of excellence and performance characteristic of Alabama's workforce enable it to compete successfully in our new economy. Two-year colleges are Alabama's first, best source of workforce training.

OP-ED ESSAY
DR. FRED GAINOUS, CHANCELLOR
ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION

WOMEN, POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION, AND THE ECONOMY

It is no accident that fifty-six percent of Alabama's two-year college students are women. The increase in women enrolling in two-year colleges is a trend which is expected to continue in Alabama and throughout the South. It is directly attributable to the new economy developing in our state. Alabama and the region in general have experienced a growing "feminization of the workforce."

The new economy of our state increasingly requires and rewards adaptability and people skills. Women generally excel in both areas. The new economy has required workers to give up old skills and learn new skills on a continuous basis. Women have proven more willing than men to do so. Beginning in the early 1980's, as new occupations opened to them, women began to demonstrate a stronger commitment to postsecondary education than men. In particular older women proved much more likely to enroll in postsecondary education than older men. Women have more often returned to two-year colleges for new skills and competencies, which have made them more employable in the new economy.

As a result, women have moved into high-wage, high-skill and professional and administrative jobs at a faster rate than men. This in turn has caused women's earnings to rise faster than men's earnings. The earnings gap between men and women is narrowing for those with education beyond high school. More and more women have secured education beyond high school, and now the earnings of men and women with significant amounts of postsecondary education who work full-time have converged.

At the same time that women's labor force participation in Alabama and across the South has risen steadily, men's labor force participation has slowly but steadily declined. The decline has been most dramatic for men with no more than a high school education. Although men still outnumber women in executive and managerial jobs, men are also more heavily represented in occupations which are growing slowly or declining. Women, on the other hand, are more often represented in high-growth occupations such as accounting and communications, and have increased their employment in traditionally male-dominant occupations such as computer science and precision trades.

The message is clear. People, regardless of gender, who pursue postsecondary education improve their lives. Alabama's two-year colleges are the vital link between success and failure in our new economy.

AN OP-ED ESSAY
DR. FRED GAINOUS, CHANCELLOR
ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION

THE QUIET REVOLUTION IN WORKFORCE TRAINING

Congress' recent adoption of the *Workforce Investment Act of 1998* is producing dramatic change throughout the nation. The act teams two-year colleges, business and industry and other service providers in a unified effort to bring about continuous improvement of the workforce. That effort is directed not from Washington, but from the state and local levels. This ensures that workforce development meets the specific, unique employment demands in the state as a whole, and within the various communities of the state.

Replacing the *Job Training Partnership Act of 1982*, the *Workforce Investment Act of 1998* revolutionizes the provision of workforce training through the creation of a statewide one-stop delivery system. This system includes two-year colleges and a network of workforce training service providers designated as official one-stop center partners acting cooperatively in each region of the state. These one-stop centers represent an attempt to locate all of the services needed by job seekers and employers in centralized locations in local communities. For job seekers, these services include job listings, assessment and counseling, pre-vocational training, occupational skills training, job readiness training, and adult and literacy education. For employers, services include listings of qualified potential employees in their community and training services available for their current employees.

This new approach is funded by three federal funding streams flowing to the state, giving the state an opportunity to create an effective system of workforce training touching every community. Well over $11 billion in federal funding will provide the resources necessary to implement the new workforce development system nationwide in its first year of operation. The entire effort is built on the premise that postsecondary education and business leaders will join together to identify the state's workforce development needs and to formulate a strategic plan for meeting those needs.

According to the new system, funds for workforce development are disbursed with the assistance of a State Workforce Investment Board consisting of the Governor, two members of each house of the legislature, representatives of two-year colleges, representatives of business (who must comprise a majority of the members), elected officials, representatives of labor organizations, state agency heads responsible for job training policy, individuals with experience in delivering programs and youth services, and other appropriate representatives. All are appointed by the Governor with the exception of the members of the legislature.

The State Workforce Investment Board develops a Statewide Workforce Investment System, identifies Local Workforce Investment Areas, develops the state's Five-Year Workforce Investment Plan, monitors the Workforce Investment System, and oversees workforce investment activities to ensure coordination and non-duplication among service providers.

Each Local Workforce Investment Area is governed by a Local Workforce Investment Board consisting of members appointed by the "chief local elected official" as designated by the Governor, representatives of business (who must comprise a majority of the members and one of whom must serve as chair), representatives of two-year colleges, representatives of secondary schools, representatives of labor organizations, members of community based organizations, members of economic development agencies, providers of adult education and literacy, and one-stop partners.

The Local Workforce Investment Board develops and submits to the Governor a Five-Year Local Workforce Investment Plan, designates local one-stop centers, designates eligible providers of training services, negotiates local performance measures, and assists in developing statewide employment statistics.

This new approach to organizing and delivering assessment and training services consolidates and modernizes workforce development training efforts. It makes the State Board of Education a vital participant in workforce development. It recognizes two-year colleges as essential components of workforce development. It brings business and industry leaders from the state and the community level into partnerships with two-year colleges and other service providers. Through this new effort, two-year colleges in partnership with business and industry can be the engine which propels Alabama's workforce into the next century.

OP-ED ESSAYS:
SHARING THE PERSPECTIVE OF ALABAMA'S TWO-YEAR COLLEGES

FRED GAINOUS, CHANCELLOR
THE ALABAMA COLLEGE SYSTEM

July 9, 1999

Vol. III

CONTENTS

Page

Foreword 1

Correctional Education in Alabama 3

Task Force Reports to State Board of Education 5

Two-Year Colleges Offer Flexible, Responsive, Industry Directed Workforce Development 7

Alabama's Two-Year Colleges Address Critical Skills Gap 9

Two-Year Colleges the First, Best Source of Workforce Training 10

Re-engineering Alabama's System of Two-Year Colleges 11

Redefining the Role of Alabama's Two-Year Colleges 13

Literacy - Everybody Plays, or Everybody Pays 15

Alabama Ranks 50th in Access to Postsecondary Education for Students from Low Income Families 17

Alabama's Two-Year Colleges Will Meet the Workforce Needs of the Future 19

FOREWORD

THE ALABAMA COLLEGE SYSTEM

MISSION STATEMENT

The Alabama College System, consisting of public two-year community, junior, and technical colleges and an upper division college, seeks to provide accessible quality educational opportunities, promote economic growth, and enhance the quality of life for the people of Alabama.

Alabama's public two-year colleges were established 30 years ago to accomplish the mission outlined above. Because they are a special component of higher education with a special mission, they offer an important perspective for consideration by the public and by policy makers. This unique perspective is built on the following principles:

- Public policy decisions to provide universal access to educational opportunities beyond high school have created the two-year college. Central to the mission of the two-year college is the principle that people of all ages, of all races, of all stations in life, and in all geographic regions should have access. Success in providing access to the two-year college is judged by the degree to which persons from all socio-economic, cultural, and racial and ethnic backgrounds; students of all ages and gender; and students disabled by various physical or learning disabilities enroll in and succeed in college level programs. Inherent in access is a commitment to an "open door" policy which provides meaningful access to all constituents in the service area who can benefit from college programs and services. A special commitment of the two-year college is to attract and serve students who are traditionally under-represented in higher education.

- The Alabama College System is committed to providing barrier-free access to quality instructional programs and activities within a reasonable commuting distance of each student. Population trends, socio-economic status, ethnicity, age, gender, and prior learning conditions have significant implications for the future of postsecondary education in the State of Alabama. Factors such as these impact the quality and effectiveness of The Alabama College System in accomplishing its mission. Such demographic factors affect how well an institution of postsecondary education serves its students and the residents of its service area.

- Alabama's two-year colleges have reached out actively into their constituent communities to assess the need for vocational/occupational training. They have become sensitive to the fact that those individuals most in need of training for employment, workforce training, and education for career advancement are often the same individuals who are unfamiliar with a campus environment, and are least likely to seek needed services. The Alabama College System is positioned to serve as the catalyst for workforce development in the state. It has a complete array of training delivery systems which can be used to serve the citizens of Alabama.

- As a public resource, each institution of The Alabama College System should have sufficient support from state and local sources so that each may accomplish its role, scope, and mission without adverse impact on institutional operations, services, or students.

- System structure should be determined by the colleges' abilities to be flexible and to respond aggressively to the diverse needs of both students and employers. The colleges should be at the center of regional economic development efforts. System structure should be based on access, delivering more instruction to more people. Educational delivery systems should produce cost efficiencies, provide enhanced instructional and student services, provide improved programs and services to businesses and industries, and contribute to the economic and cultural health of the communities in which the colleges are located.

- The citizens of Alabama are entitled to access to programs that enhance the quality of life, prepare them to be producers of goods and services, and assist them to be lifelong learners. Services include: occupational/technical education, academic transfer education, literacy education, continuing education, student support services, workforce development, and cultural and civic awareness.

- The overriding consideration and dominant factor for decision-making in The Alabama College System institutions must be quality. It affects and permeates each facet of the institutions. Neither resource allocation nor policy development should impact negatively The Alabama College System and its ability to deliver services.

- The Alabama College System is committed to a seamless transition for the secondary student entering from high school, for the college student moving between and among colleges and universities, and for the adult who comes from business and industry or life.

AN OP-ED ESSAY
DR. FRED GAINOUS, CHANCELLOR
ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION

CORRECTIONAL EDUCATION IN ALABAMA

Correctional education is an emotionally charged issue. It is, however, extremely important to the welfare of the state and its citizens, and for that reason it deserves careful consideration.

In discussing correctional education, it is important to understand what it is and what it is not. Correctional education is NOT an argument against punishing criminals for their misconduct. Correctional education is NOT an argument in favor of "country club" prisons. Correctional education is NOT an argument about who should operate prisons.

Correction education IS self defense for Alabama and her citizens. The issue is not whether there will be education in prison. There has always been education in prison. The issue is what skills prisoners will learn while they are incarcerated.

Most prisoners simply do not possess the skills necessary to become productive citizens. Postsecondary correctional education seeks to teach students the skills they need to become contributing members of our rapidly changing society and its increasingly complex economy. The alternative is to warehouse criminals (that are increasing at the alarming rate of 150 per week) in institutions where their only educational opportunity is to learn how to be better criminals.

Why is correctional education a postsecondary educational concern? State law directs the State Board of Education to deliver educational opportunities to incarcerated individuals. In addition, the Board must comply with provisions of two federal court orders which state that each inmate shall have the opportunity to participate in basic education programs and vocational training programs designed to teach a marketable skill, and that the two-year college system will be used to provide this education.

How much does it cost to provide prisoners the skills they need to become productive citizens? In the most recent funding cycle the state appropriation for all correctional education in Alabama represents less than one percent of the total higher education appropriation. The total correctional education appropriation costs each Alabamian about $1.96 per year.

Does correctional education accomplish anything? Postsecondary correctional education impacts recidivism. Recidivism, when a former inmate returns to prison, is a serious concern among many Alabamians. The overall recidivism rate for inmates in the Alabama prison system is approximately 35 percent. By comparison, the recidivism rate for students completing a correctional education program at Ingram State Technical College is 5.7 percent.

Approximately 3,000 of Alabama's prison inmates are currently pursuing occupational/vocational education through six of the state's two-year colleges. This means one of

every seven incarcerated individuals is gaining new skills, helping them make a successful transition back into society; acquiring the tools necessary to build lives for themselves and their families after their release from prison; and seeking, through education, to break the cycles of poverty and ignorance which put them on the road to prison in the first place.

Postsecondary correctional education programs do not merely provide occupational skills, they teach people "how to learn" and "how to work." For many students, participation in a postsecondary vocational program is their formative experience with responsibility, dependability, and accountability. Prisoners who succeed in these programs can and do hold jobs and pay taxes. They are equipped to fill important positions in our state's economy. Furthermore, postsecondary correctional education helps provide the state with skilled workers at a time when they are desperately needed.

AN OP-ED ESSAY
DR. FRED GAINOUS, CHANCELLOR
ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION

TASK FORCE REPORTS TO STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

On May 22, 1997, the Alabama State Board of Education created a Task Force for Effectiveness Planning in Postsecondary Education. The Task Force was comprised of fifteen citizens from all regions of the state, representing numerous kinds of businesses and professions. The Task Force was charged with reviewing current and future needs for postsecondary education and related workforce training in Alabama.

The Task Force has completed its work. Among its findings are that first, Alabama's workforce is unprepared to compete globally; second, that the state's workforce is increasingly dependent on older workers who did not receive as students, and who still do not have, the technical skills to compete in the high-wage modern workplace; and third, that Alabama's high dropout and illiteracy rates inhibit the development of high-tech, high-wage industry in the state.

The Task Force found that between 1990 and 2020, the graying of Alabama's workforce will be a significant factor affecting workforce development. By 2020, the largest segment of Alabama's workforce will be aged 55-65. At the same time, fewer younger well-educated workers will be entering the workforce. This means the state's economy will be increasingly dependent upon workers who do not have high-tech, high-wage skills.

As highly trained workers skilled in the use of the latest technologies become the norm for success in the global economy, Alabama's future economic development is in jeopardy unless it can produce such workers. Already the state offers fewer jobs per hundred people than all but one other southern state. The Task Force concludes that Alabama's lag in jobs per hundred people results from the high numbers of dropouts and the high poverty rate, which discourages the development of high-tech industry in the state. The November, 1996, edition of *Financial World*, a publication read by corporate officials across the nation, ranked Alabama 46 among the 50 states in terms of its educated labor supply. The Task Force concludes, "Our workforce faces a discouraging future unless we commit ourselves to strong efforts to ensure that current workers get the literacy and skill training they need and that young people meet high standards and do not fail and that both have continuing opportunities for education and skill advancement."

The Task Force did not find that Alabama's two-year colleges are unaccredited. All of Alabama's two-year colleges are fully accredited. All community and junior colleges and one technical college are accredited by the Commission on Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, a regional accrediting agency. All technical colleges are accredited by the Commission on Occupational Education, a national accrediting body. The Task Force did not condemn Alabama's two-year colleges. The Task Force found in Alabama's two-year colleges some exemplary practices related to workforce training. The Task Force found in Alabama's two-year

colleges the potential to serve as the backbone of the state's workforce development effort. The Task Force made several recommendations intended to improve and refine Alabama's system of postsecondary education in order to better prepare citizens for employment in the next century.

Those specific recommendations will be discussed in the coming weeks. More important than any individual recommendation, however, is the primary message of the Task Force. If we are to achieve global workforce and economic competitiveness, it is imperative that Alabama have a two-year college system that provides state-of-the-art education to its workforce, and access to state-of-the-art technology to its business and industry. We must have two-year colleges which are flexible and responsive to employers in meeting workforce and economic development challenges. The Alabama State Board of Education should be highly commended for the manner in which it has gone about defining the role of two-year colleges in workforce development in our state.

AN OP-ED ESSAY
DR. FRED GAINOUS, CHANCELLOR
ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION

TWO-YEAR COLLEGES OFFER FLEXIBLE, RESPONSIVE, INDUSTRY DIRECTED WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

We have here in our own state a model of effective, efficient workforce development based on an active partnership among industry, a two-year college and a state agency. It is a model of flexibility and responsiveness in meeting the needs of industry through the organizing of postsecondary education and training resources. It is a model of promoting access to high-skill jobs according to the needs of an employer and the conditions of the local and regional economy.

Calhoun Community College, the Alabama Industrial Development Training Institute (AIDT), and the Alabama Employment Service, in conjunction with Boeing, have developed a pre-employment screening process for the Delta IV rocket production facility being constructed in Decatur. The college has renovated several thousand square feet of classroom, lab facilities and office space on its Decatur Campus which is being used in screening over 36,000 employment applications to date. More than 300 people are tested each week in the first phase of the assessment process. Approximately 75 applicants each week move to the second phase of the process. The cooperative agreement among the parties has established a sophisticated screening process to identify employees possessing the necessary skills for positions in production, production maintenance, and technical and administrative support.

The 1.5 million square foot Boeing production plant located on 410 acres in Decatur's Industrial Park is 60 percent complete and is expected to be finished by the end of the year. The first rocket is to be produced and shipped out of the facility by March 2000. Boeing's Delta IV rocket production plant expects to produce 40 rockets annually to be offered to commercial launch customers in telecommunications as well as to the U.S. government. Boeing currently has hired approximately 60 workers at the plant with employment expected to grow to 600 workers in 1999 and 2000 workers by the year 2004.

A special training center will be built on the Decatur Campus of Calhoun Community College to support the need for continuous high level training and instructional programming in aerospace technology and advanced rocketry airframe technology. It is anticipated that Boeing will develop its training program through Calhoun Community College. Boeing estimates that up to 900 people each year will require training offered through this program. The center will be an exact duplicate on a very small scale of the Delta IV Rocket Manufacturing Plant, and much of the teaching will be on machines that are actually used in rocket production at the Boeing facility.

Executives of Boeing are most complimentary of the technical expertise and the responsive, flexible cooperative working relationship with their AIDT and Calhoun Community College partners. They indicate that the assessment tools developed for Boeing by AIDT and Calhoun

Community College have become a national model for identifying leadership qualities in future employees unlike any other now in operation. Boeing executives have high praise for The Alabama College System noting that, thanks to The Alabama College System, their Alabama experience has been far more successful than Boeing initiatives in other states.

There are similar examples of such responsive, flexible partnerships between industry and Alabama two-year colleges in all regions of the state. The further development and refinement of these partnerships to better prepare the state's workforce for high-skill, high-wage jobs is imperative. Alabama's two-year colleges are the key to preparing the state's workforce for the next century.

AN OP-ED ESSAY
DR. FRED GAINOUS, CHANCELLOR
ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION

ALABAMA'S TWO-YEAR COLLEGES ADDRESS CRITICAL SKILLS GAP

Once more we have testimony to the overwhelming need to better prepare our citizens for participation in the global economy which is with us today. The National Association of Manufacturer's Center for Workforce Success has found in a recent study that there is "a continuing, worsening skills gap in the manufacturing workforce" of our nation. This skills gap limits the ability of manufacturers to innovate, change, and compete. This, in turn, negatively impacts our economy, jobs and income.

Eighty-eight percent of manufacturers report difficulty in finding qualified candidates to fill jobs ranging from unskilled production-line positions to high-skilled technical positions. Sixty percent of manufacturers report that they typically must reject between 50 and 100 percent of job applicants as unqualified. Sixty-two percent of manufacturers report that job applicants have inadequate technical skills. One-third of manufacturers report that job applicants have inadequate reading and writing skills.

The skills gap is found not only in new, entry-level job applicants, but also in "incumbent workers," those already on the job. Up to two-thirds of manufacturers report that incumbent workers have "serious deficiencies in math skills and oral and written communications skills." Forty-eight percent of manufacturers indicate that incumbent employees lack the ability to read technical documents and blueprints. Almost two-thirds of manufacturers report that current employees are deficient in basic employability skills, such as timeliness, readiness and productivity.

How can we meet the needs of manufacturers in addressing the skills gap? By using our system of two-year colleges to develop our workforce, providing manufacturers and other segments of our economy with the training mechanism to ensure them a qualified workforce ready for the global economy which is already with us. We need not invent new bureaucracies and new structures to deal with this problem. The solution is in leveraging existing resources, our two-year colleges, focusing them on workforce development for our new economy, and on direct partnerships with businesses and industries to meet their needs.

AN OP-ED ESSAY
DR. FRED GAINOUS, CHANCELLOR
ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION

TWO-YEAR COLLEGES THE FIRST, BEST SOURCE OF WORKFORCE TRAINING

It is clear from all accounts that our nation and our state face serious challenges in producing qualified workers to fill the high-skill, high-wage jobs which will allow our workers to compete in the new economy. Among companies which report labor shortages, 62 percent report a lack of semiskilled workers. Fifty percent of manufacturers report shortages of unskilled workers. Forty-five percent of manufacturers report problems attracting adequate numbers of machinists, 43 percent report shortages of engineers, and 42 percent report shortages of technicians and electricians.

Nationally, it is reported that approximately 40 percent of manufacturers receive fewer than five applications for each job opening, while 27 percent of manufacturers reject more than 75 percent of job applicants because they are unqualified. This is a sobering reality in view of Peter Drucker's assessment that "America's sole advantage in the global economy is our supply of knowledge workers." The continued development of the economy of our nation and our state hinges on the development of advanced manufacturing methods and technologies, and the application of those methods and technologies by a well-trained, highly-skilled workforce.

The vehicle for the training of such a workforce in Alabama is our system of two-year colleges. Already 13 percent of manufacturers indicate that they do not even consider hiring job candidates unless they have a degree or have received vocational training. Sixty-six percent of manufacturers report that two-year colleges are their preferred external sources for meeting their workforce training needs.

Eighty percent of the new jobs available over the next decade will require a minimum of two-years of postsecondary education. Eighty-five percent of all jobs will require skilled workers or professionals. Seventy-five percent of the people working today will still be in the labor force in the next decade, requiring continuous higher level training. Seventy-five percent of Alabamians will not attain a four-year college degree. Two-year colleges are the immediate means for ensuring that the levels of knowledge and training and the standards of excellence and performance characteristic of Alabama's workforce enable it to compete successfully in our new economy. Two-year colleges are Alabama's first, best source of workforce training.

AN OP-ED ESSAY
DR. FRED GAINOUS, CHANCELLOR
ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION

RE-ENGINEERING ALABAMA'S SYSTEM OF TWO-YEAR COLLEGES

Alabama's two-year college system, like all others, must from time to time evaluate its role, scope, and mission. In May of 1997, the Alabama State Board of Education appointed a Task Force to develop recommendations to guide the System's development and direction as it re-engineers itself to enhance services to its constituents. The recommendations of the Task Force, the *Workforce Investment Act* and other changes in federal legislation, and the need for a skilled workforce statewide have all converged to serve as catalysts for change. This phenomenon serves to highlight the unique opportunity the confluence of change and leadership has brought about in Alabama. Never before have so many forces converged upon the two-year college system in Alabama with such magnitude. In many ways they rival or exceed the very forces that created the System. The implications and opportunities for re-engineering are simply staggering.

Yet, as the System embarks on this new journey, it realizes that the perception of its history as one of fragmentation, unnecessary duplication, and political influence is problematic. While much of this criticism about the System's history is more perception than reality it is recognized that change is necessary. For the last decade The Alabama College System, through the leadership of the Alabama State Board of Education, has focused on the elimination of unnecessary duplication through merging and consolidating institutions. It has worked cohesively to enhance access and opportunity and demanded accountability. The political realities of the System will remain as they are until: (1) there are adequate resources available for funding K-12, two-year colleges, and universities; and (2) its governance is no longer threatened. Notwithstanding the history of The Alabama College System, decision and policy makers, upon objective inspection, will find that there is no other system of education in Alabama that can provide for the educational and economic development needs of the state. With 30 public two-year colleges located strategically throughout the state, The Alabama College System should indeed be the premiere and presumptive deliverer of the first two years of undergraduate education, workforce training, and adult education.

Under the leadership of the Alabama State Board of Education, two-year colleges have played an increasingly significant role in workforce development in Alabama. The Board now stands on the threshold of a revolution in workforce development which will make Alabama's two-year colleges the integral component of a unified, coordinated structure preparing the state's workforce for the global competition of the 21st century. The juxtaposition of the Board's Task Force recommendations and the *Workforce Investment Act of 1998* makes the Board the pivotal organization for delivering a comprehensive system of skilled workforce training to meet the future economic development needs of the state.

The Board's Task Force recommendations clearly parallel the *Workforce Investment Act of 1998*. That Act allows the Board to bring together the existing patchwork of fragmented and

duplicative workforce training programs into a workforce development system for a new era of global competition. The new system unites postsecondary career technical training, adult education, the JTPA structure, the employment service structure, rehabilitation services, welfare services and other service providers with business and industry. The *Workforce Investment Act* presents the Board with the greatest opportunity of the last fifty years for creating a world-class workforce development system for Alabama. The Board is the only entity capable of coordinating postsecondary career technical training, the contributions of other service providers, and the private sector involvement which has been the impetus for the creation of the Board's Task Force.

The State Board of Education, by coordinating its Task Force recommendations with the *Workforce Investment Act*, will increase the employment, retention, and earnings of Alabama's workforce. It will improve the quality of the state's workforce, reduce welfare dependency, and enhance the productivity and competitiveness of the state.

AN OP-ED ESSAY
DR. FRED GAINOUS, CHANCELLOR
ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION

REDEFINING THE ROLE OF ALABAMA'S TWO-YEAR COLLEGES

The cornerstone of the *Workforce Investment Act* is a system of one-stop service delivery centers. Such centers create a single point of entry to job training programs with access to core employment-related services, including job search assistance and labor market information, skills needed for occupations in demand, wages paid, and employment trends. The location of one-stop centers within the state's system of two-year colleges utilizes existing structures which already provide such services at convenient locations, focused upon adult clients. The *Workforce Investment Act* replaces the *Adult Education Act* and incorporates the *Adult and Family Literacy Act* as a vital link to workforce development. The addition of the adult education function to two-year colleges equipped with one-stop centers will create a natural, seamless transition from literacy to work. No other segment of education or training has the ability to deliver services as does the two-year college system through its dynamic structure and established services to its constituents.

The role of the Board as the state's leader in workforce development positions is to define the role of community colleges in Alabama in the 21st century, and to impact the lives of hundreds of thousands of Alabamians. The two-year college system is uniquely qualified to deliver to Alabama citizens the technical, communication, and cognitive skills necessary to compete with workers around the world. The incumbent workforce must be retrained on a continuous basis to achieve and maintain optimum productivity. All Alabamians must be able to enter the labor force and to compete successfully, and only Alabama's two-year colleges can bring this to fruition.

In implementing recommendations for change, there must always be consideration of the creation of additional bureaucracy with more layers of administration and reporting relationships. As well, there must be consideration of whether the change will provide for the enhanced delivery of services or whether it will result in unnecessary duplication of services.

As the result of the convergence of the *Workforce Investment Act* and the recommendations of the Task Force for Effectiveness Planning in Postsecondary Education, there is a rare opportunity to provide improved services to students, to workers, and to employers, and to reduce administrative inefficiencies and duplication. There is the chance to establish a true, one-stop delivery system using components of an already existing administrative structure and adapting others.

The key to this change is the accountability provided by a single governing board for all components of the delivery of educational and training services: the Alabama State Board of Education. Pre-employment job skills, pre-vocational training to high technology programs, and university transfer programs, are all supervised and regulated by the Board. With a very few administrative and programmatic changes, The Alabama College System will be ready in a relatively short period of time to be the presumptive deliverer of workforce training in the State of Alabama.

Accountability mechanisms in the form of Board policies, Chancellor guidelines, and Department of Postsecondary Education enforcement and oversight are already in place to ensure the delivery of quality and responsive training to students and workers and for employers.

The Alabama State Board of Education, the two-year college presidents, and the Chancellor recognize that the recommendations of the Task Force are at the center of the re-invention of the colleges and the future of Alabama. The confluence of the change and the recommendations of the Task Force are fundamental and significant to the development of the future of the System. Yet, it is the inclusive leadership of the Alabama State Board of Education and the colleges that will forge and galvanize the future of the System around education, training, literacy and economic development.

AN OP-ED ESSAY
DR. FRED GAINOUS, CHANCELLOR
ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION

LITERACY - EVERYBODY PLAYS, OR EVERYBODY PAYS

Literacy experts from across the country recently convened a two-day forum focused upon improving literacy. The meeting came in the wake of a recent study by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development which revealed that among the nations studied, only Poland ranked below the United States in the percentage of its population functioning at or below a fifth grade literacy level. It is estimated that 44 million American adults, slightly more than 23 percent of the adult population, function at the lowest level of literacy. Of that number, only four million are enrolled in programs designed to assist them.

Alabama currently ranks fourth highest among the states in the percentage of its adult population functioning at the lowest level of literacy - 25 percent. In one Alabama county, more than 50 percent of the adults function at the lowest level of literacy. In 21 additional counties, 30 to 50 percent of the adult population functions at the lowest level of literacy. In another 37 counties, 20 to 30 percent of the adult population functions at the lowest level of literacy. This means that in almost nine out of ten Alabama counties, 20 percent or more of the adult population function at or below a fifth grade level of literacy.

Bringing it to the hometown level, in five of Alabama's municipalities with an adult population of at least 5,000, more than 40 percent of adults function at the lowest level of literacy. In another five municipalities, 30 to 40 percent of adults are likewise affected. In an additional 21 municipalities, 20 to 30 percent of adults function at the lowest level of literacy. This means that in more than six out of ten Alabama municipalities with an adult population of 5,000 or more, 20 percent or more of the adults function at or below a fifth grade level of literacy.

The costs of low literacy are easily observed. Seventy percent of prisoners are persons who function at a low literacy level. Teen pregnancy rates are higher among those with low literacy skills. Those with low literacy skills are often unemployed or employed at meager rates, and over half live in poverty. Children's chances for success in school are affected by the literacy level of their parents. Children's health is affected by the literacy level of their parents.

As tragic as these consequences of low literacy may be, related to all of them and more is this -- Alabama's workforce cannot be prepared for the workplace of the 21st century if 20 percent or more of the adults in nine of ten Alabama counties, and in six of ten Alabama municipalities, function at or below a fifth grade level of literacy. The jobs of the new global economy require well-trained, literate employees. Neither the jobs, nor the companies that offer them, can come to a place characterized by low-level literacy skills.

So what can we do to improve our chances for a brighter future in Alabama? Here are a few suggestions from the recent national forum on literacy to start the process:

- Develop a state literacy report card to monitor regularly improvements in the state's battle for a literate workforce.
- Launch a major public awareness campaign to encourage adults with basic skills needs to seek help, and to expand the public support for a literate workforce.
- Develop a larger core of well-trained professional literacy teachers.
- Develop standards and credentialing of literacy teachers as a way to improve the quality of instruction.
- Provide better pay and benefits to effective literacy teachers.
- Recruit more well-trained literacy volunteers.
- Provide regular professional development and training seminars for literacy teachers and volunteers.
- Establish intensive summer institutes for literacy teachers.
- Follow up adults who have left literacy programs to determine what changes can be made to improve retention.
- Provide more support services, such as daycare and transportation.
- Work more closely with the corporate sector to expand literacy instruction beyond traditional settings.
- Strengthen the role of libraries in providing and supporting literacy services.
- Encourage high quality literacy programs for inmates at all prison facilities.
- Expand efforts to identify and address learning disabilities across the life span.

AN OP-ED ESSAY
DR. FRED GAINOUS, CHANCELLOR
ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION

ALABAMA RANKS 50TH IN ACCESS TO POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION FOR STUDENTS FROM LOW INCOME FAMILIES

Access to postsecondary education for all citizens is becoming the most important issue of our time. Individual income and the quality of life hinge on such access. More important, the economic future of our state depends on access to postsecondary education for all of our citizens. A fully trained, fully engaged workforce, excluding no segment, is crucial to our state's economic survival in the coming century. Access to postsecondary education for all citizens is the key to that future.

Access to postsecondary education is most critical to students from low income families because they experience more barriers to educational opportunity. Unfortunately, the chance for students from low income families to access postsecondary education is less now that at any time since 1970. The chance that a student will graduate from high school and continue into postsecondary education between the ages of 18 and 24 is roughly 35 percent for those from families with an annual income of $24,500. This is in sharp contrast to the 80 percent chance that a student will graduate from high school and continue into postsecondary education between the ages of 18 and 24 for those from families with an annual income above $72,000. This represents an eight percent increase since 1980 for students from families with an annual income of $24,500, but a 17 percent increase since 1980 for students from families with an annual income above $72,000.

This assessment of the chance of students from low income families to access postsecondary education is particularly sobering since the percentage of the population living in poverty in Alabama, 20 percent, is higher in only two states. Alabama's median family income is only about $1,400 more than the $24,500 family income level used to measure the point at which chances for student access to postsecondary education diminish drastically. In fact, almost 20 percent of Alabama counties for which the information is available reflect a median family income level below $24,500. It should be no surprise then that *The Mortenson Research Seminar on Public Policy Analysis of Opportunity for Postsecondary Education* in its most recent report ranks Alabama 50th in access to postsecondary education for students from low income families. This is an issue which should concern all Alabamians. Alabama's workforce cannot be prepared for the workplace of the 21st century unless access to postsecondary education is made available to all citizens.

The new jobs which come to Alabama will require more education. In our global economy, those who achieve only a high school education will be worse off than those who dropped out of high school a generation ago. In the future, all of our citizens will need some level of education beyond high school to be productive members of Alabama's workforce.

Eighty percent of the new jobs available in the next decade will require a minimum of two years of postsecondary education. Continued and improved access to postsecondary education is the most important issue in our state's workforce development effort.

Continued and improved access to postsecondary education is the key to Alabama's economic success in the next century. It is the mission of Alabama's two-year colleges to provide improved access to postsecondary education. The state's two-year colleges must aggressively pursue this mission. Without improved access, the economic future is bleak. Neither new jobs, nor the companies that offer them, can come to a place characterized by limited access to postsecondary education.

AN OP-ED ESSAY
DR. FRED GAINOUS, CHANCELLOR
ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION

ALABAMA'S TWO-YEAR COLLEGES WILL MEET THE WORKFORCE NEEDS OF THE FUTURE

In the new economy, there is growing pressure on companies to increase productivity. Response to this need for increased productivity is directly related to the quality and the level of education of the company's workforce. Representatives of these companies tell us that today's employees need multiple skills in order to succeed. As the result of rapid change in technology and in operational practice, employers indicate the need for employees to demonstrate broad competencies, rather than narrow, job-specific skills. Economic analysts indicate that the future will require employees to have more skills and increased education.

According to a recent publication of the National Alliance of Business, there is potential for a severe labor shortage in the next decade. Such a shortage will result from the convergence of several factors. These factors include the first retirement of the baby-boom workers; the slowing of population growth between 1966 and 1986, resulting in a smaller labor pool from which to replace the retiring baby-boomers; and the preponderance of high-skill jobs requiring employees to be better educated. It is estimated that 80 percent of new jobs available over the next decade will require a minimum of two years of postsecondary education.

It is apparent that the prosperity of Alabama and her citizens is directly related to postsecondary education. This is true not only for those seeking to enter the workforce for the first time, but it is also true for those already employed – incumbent workers. It is estimated that up to 85 percent of those presently in the workforce will still be in the workforce over the next decade. Lifelong learning has now become a part of corporate culture. Postsecondary institutions must respond to the needs of businesses and employees for education anywhere at anytime. Such education must be low cost, convenient, and relevant to the needs of both employers and employees. This is the special mission of two-year colleges under the plan adopted by the Alabama State Board of Education to reengineer the state's system of two-year colleges, recommended by the Board's Task Force for Effectiveness Planning in Postsecondary Education.

The only way to accomplish this mission is to maintain a close and continuing dialogue with business and industry. This is precisely what is envisioned by the Alabama State Board of Education through the creation of a network of regional advisory councils, consistent with existing economic planning regions, comprised primarily of representatives of business and industry. Such a network will provide feedback to the Board on the responsiveness and quality of the workforce education and training provided by two-year colleges. Regular exchange of information through these advisory councils will enable colleges to tailor program offerings to the specific needs of business and industry within the region. Alabama's two-year colleges, as the result of the leadership of the Alabama State Board of Education, will maintain close and continuous relationships with employers to ensure high-quality service, and to ensure the prosperity of the state and her citizens.